

# KEEPER OF THE GATE

THE REMINISCENCES OF  
CAPTAIN JOHN IRON  
*Harbour Master of Dover*

FOREWORD BY  
ADMIRAL OF THE FLEET SIR ROGER KEYES, BT.  
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## FOREWORD

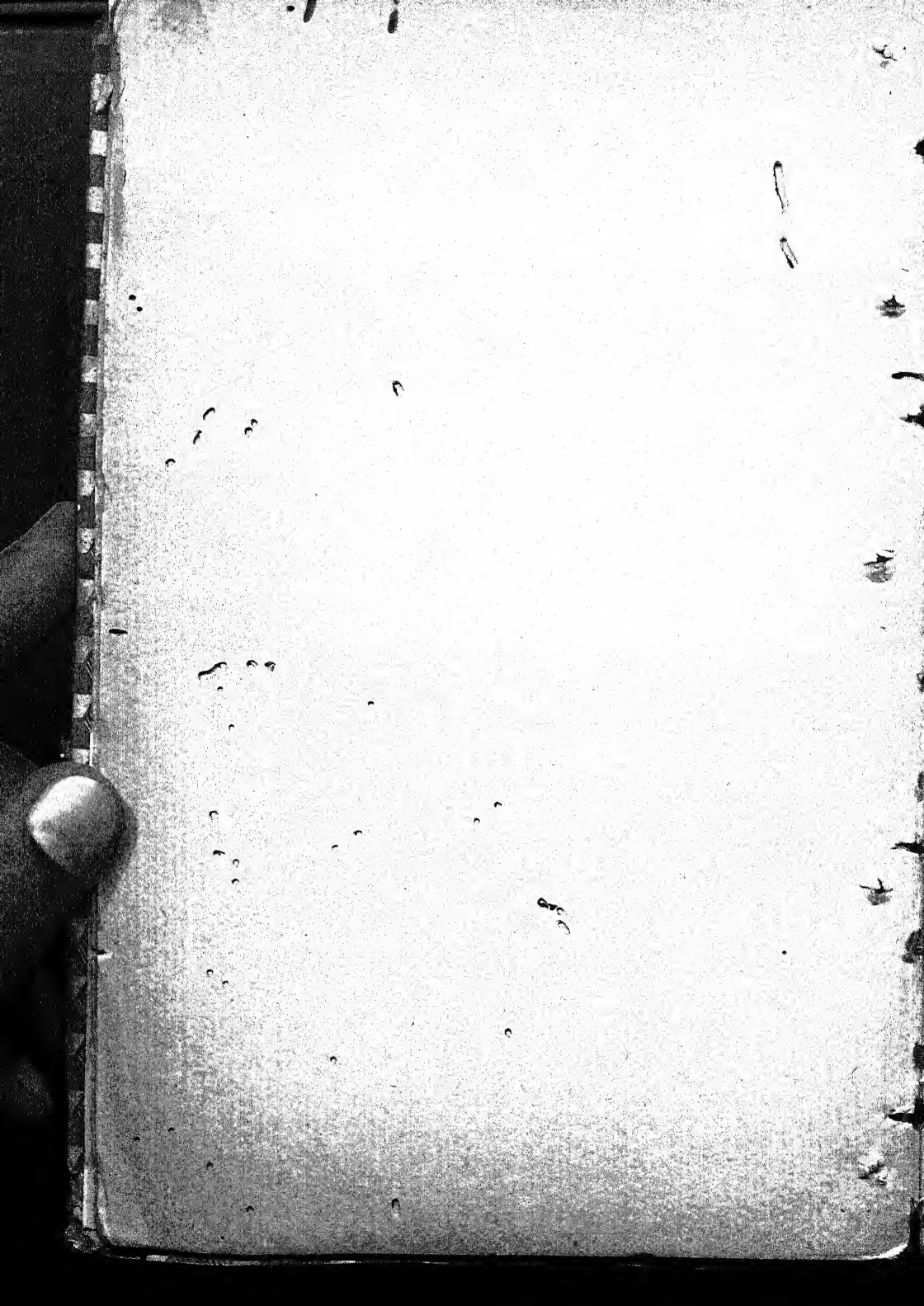
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I HAD met Captain Iron when I was a Captain in the Atlantic Fleet and later when I was Commodore of the Submarine Service, but I did not really get to know him until I took command of the Dover Patrol on 1st January, 1918, when he had been Harbour Master at Dover for twenty years.

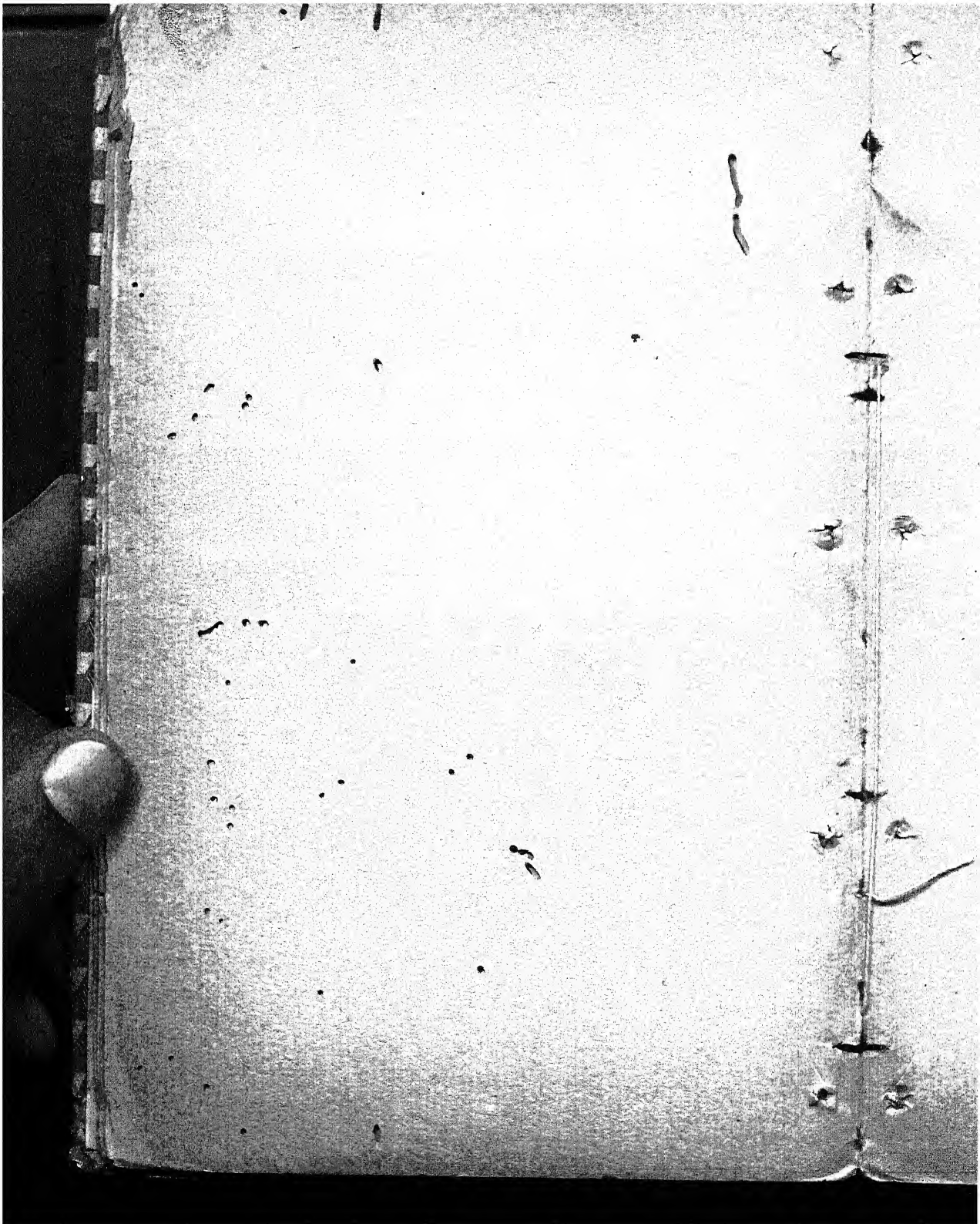
Soon after the War commenced, Captain Iron was appointed Admiralty Salvage Officer, and in the course of his duties he won the affection and regard of the Navy, and made a great reputation for himself as a salvage expert. Many valuable vessels, which had been torpedoed, mined or stranded, were brought into port, thanks to Captain Iron's local knowledge, skill and indomitable spirit.

Captain Iron has written an amusing and interesting account of his varied experiences, and the *Keeper of the Gate* revives many memories of stirring times in the Dover Patrol.



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## CHAPTER I

### AN APPRENTICE IN SAIL

IN the year 1874, being then fifteen years of age, and wanting to go to sea, my father bound me apprentice to a Mr. Foreman, who owned one ship, the *Princess Somawaitie*.

She was an old teak built vessel. I was taken on board by my father at Gravesend about six o'clock one afternoon, and within fifteen hours I had been shipwrecked. If this constitutes a record I do not know, but I have never met anyone who had quite so thrilling a start to his career at sea.

There was only one other apprentice, a nephew of the owner. We two were allotted a cabin to ourselves in the saloon, but were to mess with the carpenter and boatswain. Our cabin had a sliding door, which we closed when we turned in, but on our turning out at 6 a.m. next day we found that the door had jammed, and the carpenter had to force it open with a hand spike. This was significant in view of what was to happen very shortly. My first job was to clean out the paint locker, in the course of which I succeeded in getting myself covered in paint and ended up all colours of the rainbow.

For some reason the crew had refused duty and would not come out of the forecandle. They said they would not come out for anyone, but they came out quickly enough at 9 a.m., for at that moment the P. & O. liner *Indus* took a sheer whilst coming up river and came into our port bow, nearly cutting our vessel in two. That brought the crew out of the forecandle; they scampered on deck with such a rush that one man got his leg broken.

The *Princess Somawaitie* sank in a few minutes, the water reaching up to the sixth ratline of the main rigging, and we only just had time to get into the boats lying alongside. We all lost everything we had, and my new sailor's outfit disappeared for good. I did not easily forget the stuck cabin door, for had the collision occurred three hours earlier I and my messmate would have been drowned like rats in a trap. There would certainly have been no time to get the cabin door open.

The pilot took us boys to his home in the Mile End Road, and the next morning we were taken to the City, where we were supposed to make a statement to a solicitor, but it turned out that we were not wanted and were told that we could go.

I did not know much about London, but managed to find my way to East India Avenue, where a friend of my father's, Captain Hyde, Chairman of Lloyd's, had his office. I can remember to this day the expression on his face as he looked me over when I was shown in. I was still covered with paint, and,

moreover, my appearance had not been improved by the scramble for the boat after we were cut down and the fact that I had no clean shirt to change into. However, he gave me a pound, with instructions to come back at 4 o'clock, when he would take me with him to my home at Dover.

The only other place in London I knew was the Cannon Street Hotel, so I made for that. I walked in with all my paint on, and was at once stopped by the porter, who sent for the head waiter. The latter had a nasty sneering expression and asked me very bluntly what I was doing there. Assuming more dignity than I felt, I asked for a room where I could clean up before having lunch. His reply was, "A room to wash in will cost you half-a-crown alone." I then asked what business it was of his, and demanded to be shown the room. He gave way, and when I had myself a little more presentable, I went into the dining-room and sat down to lunch. The waiters and the guests appeared to be much disgusted at my appearance. None of the latter would condescend to sit at the same table, and I could see that there was a good deal of whispering going on between guests and waiters as to who and what I was.

I went back to Captain Hyde, and eventually got home about 8 p.m. returning a shipwrecked mariner after having been at sea for about fifteen hours. I had to stay at home for two days, whilst a new outfit of clothes was being got for me, but when I did



at last go out I found myself a regular hero amongst my friends. But the hero business soon came to an end, as I had to go back to school until I could be bound apprentice to some other shipping firm.

About June, 1874, I was bound apprentice to Mr. James Nourse, who was the owner of several fine full-rigged ships and at that time had the monopoly of the Indian Emigration Trade, which consisted of taking native emigrants from Calcutta to the West Indies. The emigrants were under Government protection, working for five years under agreement and being entitled to a free passage back to Calcutta at the end of their time. The ships carried between 800 and 1,000 souls, including men, women, and children, the freight being payable on the number of souls landed.

I signed my indentures to serve four years apprenticeship to Mr. Nourse, and he took my father and myself down to the South West India Dock to see the ship I was to join, the *Jumna*, a handsome little ship of about 1,200 tons, carrying besides her courses, double topsails, signal topgallant sails, foyals, and skysails.

On our way back to town I could not help being amused at the fact that though I had just signed an agreement not to visit taverns or houses of that class during my apprenticeship, Mr. Nourse took us into a tavern opposite Fenchurch Street and gave me a half-tankard of beer, saying, "Drink this, my

boy. You will want plenty more before you are out of your time."

I joined the *Jumna* about 6 p.m. one day in June, 1874. She was lying in St. Catherine's Dock Basin, in readiness to go to sea on the following morning, and my father left me on board, telling me I had better not go on shore again.

I must confess that I felt lonely and a little homesick, for there was no one on board but myself, the officers and lascar crew having gone ashore. I went into a little house on the after deck, which was the apprentices' quarters. The only fittings in it were four bunks, but there were plenty of cockroaches, and the whole place was very dirty, having been used as a paint store while the ship had been in dock. After cleaning out one of the bunks as well as I could, I got my mattress and blankets into it. The other bunks had ~~al-~~ready been taken by the other apprentices, who were second and third voyagers, and so knew the ropes.

About 7 o'clock the second mate came on board, and when he saw me looking pretty miserable—and I confess that I felt very much like running home to mother—he said, "Now, boy, you are not going to stay here all by yourself, so come on shore with me." You can imagine I was very pleased to, and out we went into the Ratcliff Highway, which in those days was one of the roughest places in England.

We soon met the third mate, who had been buying some second-hand clothes for the voyage, and the two men made up their minds to go to a theatre in Whitechapel. I went with them, and as it was the first theatre I had ever been in I thought it a very funny place indeed. We took a box at half-a-crown each. What the play was called I do not remember; but I know that it was very crude and hardly the sort of thing my mother would have liked me to see. It appeared to consist of the ladies on the stage showing as much of their figures as they could and adopting unusual postures, at all events unusual to a boy of fifteen. I remember thinking that my mother would not have been sleeping very comfortably herself if she had thought I was anywhere but soundly asleep in my bunk aboard the ship. Beer was passed round frequently, ~~but~~, luckily for me I am sure, the second mate would not let me have any.

To cheer things up and by way of diversion between each act a woman in the audience was sure to faint, whilst most of the time there was a fight or two going on in the pit. This appeared to be the usual thing, and few people took any notice.

When we got out—and I noticed how nice and fresh the air felt—the mates proposed to have some supper before going on board, and we went to an eating-house and had fried sausage and mashed potatoes, with more beer for the mates. The result



was that by the time we had finished they were pretty fresh, but managed to remember that they had omitted to obtain late dock passes. There was nothing for it but to get over the dock wall.

We waited for the patrol to pass, and then I was pushed and dragged over the gate, and we all made a run for the *Jumna*. We hid under the bulwarks until the patrol, who had come back, obviously having heard the noise, had passed, and then we slipped into the cabin. This was how I spent my first night away from home apart from my initial experiences in the *Princess Somawaitie*, and I thought a sailor's life a very jolly one.

Incidentally, the second mate and myself both became captains at the same time.

We were towed away about 4 o'clock the next morning, and then my actual sea life began. Our crew consisted of the captain, who was a young man making his first voyage as master, the mate, who had been captain in the same ship but had had his certificate suspended for running his ship ashore at the south end of Barbadoes, the second and third mates, a Chinese carpenter, four apprentices, and about thirty lascars and a serang, or boatswain.

We were loaded with a cargo of railway metals, sleepers, and locomotives for Nagapatam, for the Indian Railway, the sleepers being loaded direct from the pickling works and streaming with creosote.

On the second day out we were put on sea rations, consisting of three-quarters of a pound of salt pork and salt beef on alternate days. With the pork we had pea soup, and rice with the beef. The meat had been in pickle for such a long time, probably two or three years, that the fat on it was a beautiful golden yellow and the bones were honey-combed. As in those days there were no fresh vegetables, we had to eat the meat with hard biscuits. These were so hard that they were called "Liverpool Pantiles," and we had to break them with an iron belaying-pin on the corner of our sea chests, which latter served us both for seats and tables, our quarters having no fittings other than the bunks. An old cask was provided in which we kept our water. This cask had been in use so long that the water smelt and tasted horrible. Our lighting consisted of a spout lamp, the cotton wick being pushed down the spout; for oil we used to have to get old fat from the cook. The lamp was seldom used, as its smoke and smell were bad, and the blacks it sent out nearly obscured any light it gave. In any case, we generally preferred to keep on deck when the weather was anything like moderately fine.

We had three quarts of water per man served out at 4 p.m., this being the third mate's job. We had to be quick, for as soon as he had served out the water he took the pump away. The European cook—the lascars had their own—then took half of our three quarts, and more if we didn't watch him, for

cooking purposes and the so-called tea and coffee, leaving each of us boys about three pints for drinking and washing during twenty-four hours.

We had to wait until it rained hard before getting a decent wash. Then we used to strip and get out on deck and take advantage of any scupper-pipe leading from the poop or deck houses. If the rain continued after we had had our bath, we would wash our clothes and trust to Providence to dry them for us. If our mothers could have seen their darling boys during these operations, they would probably all have had fits.

After towing us down the Thames, the tug cast us off at Beachy Head, and we proceeded down Channel under all sail.

I have never forgotten my first experience of the ship being put about under full sail. When this is about to take place, all the braces and sheets are put down in running coils, so that there is no chance of a check when the yards are swung. The lower yards of the *Jumna* were 110 feet long. On the lower corners of the mainsail, foresail and crossjack are clew irons in which large blocks are shackled, and through the blocks are rove 4-inch ropes, known as the main, fore, and crossjack sheets respectively. After the yards are swung, the blocks then become the tack blocks for reeving the tack through and bousing it down.

Before putting the ship about, the heavy fore and main sheets are unshackled and a short line of about

3-inch rope is rove through a smaller block kept on the clew irons for this purpose, and a turn taken round a belaying pin to keep the main sheet aft until it is time to swing the mainyard. This is called a lazy sheet.

The first order is, "Hard a lee," and the jib sheets are slacked off as the ship comes up to the wind. As the sails begin to shake, the order is, "Mainsail haul," whereupon all lee braces and sheets are let go and the yards swung by the braces. The braces which had been weather braces become lee braces as the wind gets on the other side. As the mainyards start to swing, the crossjack yards are also swung. By this time the wind will have got on the other bow, the foresails are aback and the main and mizen sails full. The head sails are then hauled round, jib sheets made fast, and the ship is in full sail again.

My first experience of this, which was after about only two days from home, while I was still feeling the effects of sea sickness and not knowing in the least what was going to happen, was rather thrilling. The captain put me at the lazy sheet and took two turns off the pin and put the end of the rope in my hand, telling me on no account to let go. The result was that when the mainyards were swung and I was holding on to the sheet with all my might, the sheet took my hand round the pin, tearing the nails off my right hand. All the sympathy I got from the captain was a growl for having checked the



swing of the mainyard and a warning not to let it happen again—just as if I should! The mate's private opinion was that it was the captain's own fault and that I had only been trying to obey orders.

On another occasion when the ship was going to be put about, one of the main buntlines was foul of the sheer poles of the main rigging, and I was told to get up and clear it. Before I could finish the job the captain swung the mainyards, and I went flying round with the sail, holding on to the buntline. The second mate and elder apprentice jumped on the rail and tried to reach me, but I was hanging just too far from the ship. The second mate threatened that if I let go and fell into the sea he would give me a good rope's-ending. The ship at last gave a roll, and he shouted to me to let go. I did; they caught me, and we all fell on the deck together.

If one or other of the boys had done anything to displease the captain he had the playful trick of sending him up aloft to spend his watch below on the mizen skysail yard. That was not too bad in the ordinary course, but the captain would occasionally amuse himself by slacking the skysail halyards about a foot with a jerk, which was one way of seeing that the boy kept awake. It was, of course, a most dangerous thing to do, especially in the case of a "green" boy like myself; but I suppose if I had been jerked off the yard and had gone overboard or crashed on

the deck, the event would simply have meant an entry in the log: "Accidentally fell from aloft."

Although a young man, the captain seemed to like seeing things suffer. On more than one occasion I saw one or two of the lascar crew tied up and flogged by the serang on orders from the captain, and if a rat got caught in a trap, instead of drowning it, he would soak it in paraffin and set it on fire, appearing to derive great pleasure from watching it burn.

After getting through the N.E. trades, passing the Equator, and getting through the S.E. trades, we unbent all our fine weather sails and bent our heavy weather ones in readiness for westerly gales whilst running our easting down. After running our easting down, we stood up North for the Bay of Bengal.

On the passage we encountered the ordinary bad weather and gales to be expected in the lower latitudes, but during one gale the ship was run too long, and on account of the heavy sea it was considered too dangerous to heave to, so we continued running before the wind. We were practically running under water. Through the heavy seas breaking on board the decks were full up to the rails, and all hands had to come aft and live in the cabin. This gale lasted for three days, during which time we ran three hundred miles.

We duly arrived at Nagapatam on the Coromandel coast and anchored about a mile and a half from



the shore. After landing the locomotives, we were put down the holds to discharge the sleepers and rails, the boys having to work with the lascar crew. The fumes of the creosote were so bad that we were divided into shifts, as owing to the pain caused to the eyes no man could stand being down more than twenty minutes. We used hooks for dragging the sleepers about, and every time we stuck a hook into a sleeper the creosote would spurt out, when, if it got on to the face, it would cause intense smarting. We boys got very little sleep at night owing to the pain, but we were made to go through with it, and no doubt it did us good and brought us up hard.

The fumes from the creosote seemed to be able to penetrate through anything. The drinking water in the iron tanks, the beef and the pork in the hogs-heads and tierces, the biscuits in iron tanks, and all other stores smelt and tasted strongly of creosote; in fact, the drinking water turned black, and we used to have to put the day's allowance on deck and let it stand twelve hours or so before we could even attempt to drink it. This experience with creosote served me in good stead at a later date, when I was mate of a ship loaded with fine goods and some shippers brought two lighter-loads of creosoted wire for us to take to Melbourne.

When our cargo was discharged we went on to Calcutta, the ship being then thoroughly cleaned out and deodorised. We loaded rice in the lower holds, the between-decks being fitted for coolie

emigrants, of which there were about 850 men, women, and children, bound for Guadeloupe.

About the second night out from Calcutta, we boys found when we were called at 4 a.m. from our watch below that our quarters had been well sprinkled with carbolic powder. When we asked what it was for we were told that cholera had broken out amongst the emigrants.

Fortunately there was a fresh north-west wind blowing, so the air was changing throughout the ship all the time, and the epidemic lasted only a few hours. But in that time we lost about fifty of our passengers, the dead being put overboard the moment they had passed out. Being coolies for a French island, they had a French doctor, who was also protector of emigrants on behalf of the French government. His fee was one pound for every soul landed, and it did not matter if the soul was a child just born or a person who died shortly after going ashore. Every time a coolie died on the voyage, the doctor lost a pound, and he became very cross and excited when his charges began to pass out so quickly with the cholera. Much to the amusement of us boys, he would go up to some wretch lying on the deck where he had been laid after being taken ill, and looking down at the sufferer, he would say: "You lie down and think you are going to die, and damn you, you do die."

We had no more sickness to speak of after that one night, excepting the usual few cases which could

only be expected when so many people made a voyage lasting three and a half months.

• As a rule emigrant ships like ours landed as many souls as they embarked, the average of twelve deaths being made up for by an average of twelve births; but on this passage the births did not come along fast enough to make up for the ravages of the cholera and to compensate the poor old doctor. He seemed to dwell a great deal on his losses, and I believe if he had thought a few more births were due, he would have tried to bribe the captain to keep the ship at sea a few extra days and so give him a chance to get a little more of his money back, as it were.

After landing our emigrants and discharging our cargo we loaded a cargo of green sugar for London. On arrival at London we boys were allowed to go home, it being stipulated that we should return to the ship a few days before she was ready for sea again.

One evening my father, mother, and sisters were sitting round the fire at home, which was the old Harbour House, my father being Harbour Master of Dover, when he looked up from his paper and said to me: "Haven't you received orders to join your ship?" I replied, "No." He looked at me rather doubtfully and said: "The ship has sailed from London." He then told my mother to get all my things packed at once, ordered one of the tugs to be in readiness, bundled all my things on board,

and away we went round the Downs, speaking every ship lying there. My father was evidently under the impression that I had received my orders to rejoin but had said nothing about them. We did not find the ship and returned home about midnight. The first thing next morning my father wired to the owners about me, but was very relieved to get a reply to the effect that as I had been found to be a good helmsman I was being kept back for a new ship, the *Bann*, then building at Sunderland. This suited me, for besides getting a week or two longer at home, I should also be free of the second mate who had worked me pretty hard in the *Jumna*.

Alas! On joining the *Bann* at Sunderland the first person I met on getting out of the train was my old second mate.

When we left for sea it was one of the most curious beginnings to a voyage I have ever known. The ship was crowded with sailors' friends, and the second mate had missed his passage. After getting to sea the tug held us until we succeeded with the aid of the more sober of the sailors and their friends to get sufficient sails on the ship to enable her to be managed. When the tugs came alongside to take the visitors off it was a case of separating the sheep from the goats and seeing that none of the crew was smuggled ashore with the visitors.

Fortunately for the second mate we had a head wind, and after standing off the land for some

time we tacked in again, which enabled him to be put on board by a tug. As soon as he put foot in the ship he informed everyone that he was the second mate, and described what he would have done to us if the ship had sailed without him. What he could have done, had he been left behind it is hard to say, but he was in just that happy state in which a man feels he can perform miracles. After having a good sleep he became normal, or, in other words, the thoroughly good sailor he actually was.

This voyage passed off without any unusual incident. We first went to Calcutta and discharged a cargo of salt and then down to Rangoon to load a cargo of paddy and rice for Liverpool. Every time I went to Calcutta I spent a good deal of the time in hospital with dysentery, caused, no doubt, by the river water we had to drink. We had to pump it out of the Hooghli at low water, at which time it was, of course, nearly fresh; but as the natives used to put their dead in the river, the water was not so good to drink as spring water. We frequently had to clear bodies away from the cables.

While in port we were supplied with a certain quantity of fresh meat and sweet potatoes or yams, which made a nice change from salt meat, though sometimes our ration of meat had been boiled before we got it so that the cook could make soup for the cabin. We enjoyed it with hard biscuit, none the less.



I am afraid the parents of the first voyage apprentices had to pay for much of their sons' food the long run, since it was nothing for a boy to exchange a good flannel shirt for a loaf of sugar bread and a bunch of bananas obtained from the bumboat men that were allowed on board. About this time—1875-6—conditions were changing for the better, preserved potatoes and tinned mutton being supplied as rations. Flour and butter began to come our way, too, and these things made much better living.

A funny incident happened to me during my third voyage as apprentice. There were at that time certain metal watchchains being sold in England bearing on every link the stamp "C 18," referring, I believe, to some patent. In Calcutta there were several natives who used to come on board with bundles of artificial silk shawls, cloaks, etc. and pass them off on to the boys or anyone fool enough to exchange good clothes for them, the natives getting more than fifty per cent. the better of the bargain. I had bought one of these chains for ten shillings, and in Calcutta showed it to a native. When he examined it and saw the "C 18" his eyes began to sparkle and going back to his boat he returned with his arms full of shawls and other things. He began to bargain with me for the chain, wanting to get the deal done before any of his friends came on board and looking anxiously round to see if the captain or officers were likely to come along and spoil the



deal. Eventually he agreed to give me about twelve shawls, worth about thirty shillings, for the chain, which, had it been gold, would have been worth about £10.

The next morning he appeared on board in a violent rage, having had the chain tested. One or two of his friends were with him, but the latter appeared to be there to enjoy the fun rather than to back up their man. He said he was going to send for the police and swore that terrible things would happen to me if I did not return the shawls. It made him all the more mad when I laughed, and when his friends joined in the laughter he nearly went crazy. They were more on my side than on his; in fact, one whispered to me, "One day I cheatee you, another day you cheatee me. That is business."

At last the enraged one went aft to the captain, and the last I saw of him was as he was being chased over the side. I did not really want the shawls, but as I had so often been taken in by the natives I thought that a little of my own back was indicated.

On another of my early voyages a funny little incident occurred. We had rather a fussy skipper, and one of the things he fussed about was a little white dog he took along with him as companion.

One day as we boys were painting some of the deck work green this dog came nosing round, and

one of the boys gave the dog a dab with his paint brush under the tail. The animal ran aft to the skipper, and in a very short time the old man came forward in a great rage and roared out to us, "What boy has painted my dog's stern green. The boy who paints my dog's stern green paints my stern green."

He never discovered the culprit, but I think he suspected me.

On another voyage we were bound from London to the West Indies to embark homeward-bound Indian emigrants for Calcutta, and amongst the stores provided them and shipped in London were several cases of condensed milk, each case containing four dozen tins. At this time the boys were fed on salt beef, pork, and hard biscuits, without milk, sugar, or butter.

We happened to know where these cases were stowed, and one night it occurred to one of the boys of my watch that it might be a good thing to crib a case of milk. Accordingly, in the middle watch between midnight and 4 a.m., this boy was passed down a ventilator and in due course sent up a case of milk. This was passed into our quarters and opened, the tins being stowed in our bunks under the mattresses. The case was then filled with sandstone and put back in its original position.

When the boys in the other watch saw that we had milk in our coffee they thought they might

During my apprenticeship I had served in two or three vessels carrying cargoes of rails to India, and I had helped to load and discharge them, but the loading had been carried out in quite a different manner from the way the metal was being stowed in Hamburg. I spoke to the Captain about it, telling him that I thought the way the cargo was being stowed looked as if it would shift. The captain, a nice old fellow, replied that he had never been in a ship with a cargo of rails, but if it were stowed in the way I mention the ship would be half full of timber.

We left Hamburg early one morning and got to sea in the evening. It was blowing a strong N.N.W. wind, and the sea was rough. All sail was crowded on, and all went merrily until about nine o'clock, when there was a rumble like thunder and we were over on our starboard beam ends in a jiffy, the cargo in the between decks and some in the lower hold having shifted.

The order was at once given for all hands to go below and secure cargo. That was a fine order, but the carrying out of it was another matter altogether, for to go below in pitch darkness among railway metals flying about and sending out sparks like Catherine Wheels wanted a little thinking about. But as it was my job to lead the men, it was no use worrying, and they came down below after me.

It proved of little use, for as fast as we managed to get a rail up to port, half a dozen ran over to the

low side, and when this happened it was a case of every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost. After one or two men had been more or less seriously hurt and others had received cuts and bruises, we worked our way aft and got hold of some sails that had been stowed there. These sails were, of course, rolled up, and watching our chances when the cargo was lying quiet, we would make a run with a sail and drop it into the cargo. After using several sails in this way, the cargo stopped further shifting, the rails getting mixed up with the canvas, and so being prevented from sliding on one another.

On passing Dover some shore boatmen spoke to us, and I asked them to tell my father when they got ashore that we were going into Dartmouth to restow the cargo. Some years afterwards, in fact, since I have been at Dover, two boatmen came into my office and reminded me of the circumstance. I asked them what about it. They said that they had duly delivered my message to my father and had asked him to give them a drink; but he had told them to go to the man that sent them. "Are you going to give us that drink now?" they asked pointedly. "No. I'm hanged if I do," I replied. "You must have got over that particular thirst by now."

To return to the *Rutlandshire*, the weather moderated a bit and we duly arrived at Dartmouth, where the Board of Trade took the matter in hand, and the cargo was properly restowed. Our good old captain left us at Dartmouth, and his successor came aboard.



I will not mention his name, since probably some of his relatives are still alive.

He arrived on board about four o'clock in the afternoon, and had evidently been having a good time, for he was wearing a badly crushed silk hat and one slipper and one boot. However, he had the crew mustered, and having said that we looked a pretty good lot, informed us that he was going on shore again and that the ship was to be ready for sea by eight o'clock. He then looked at me and said, "I believe your father knows the owner, but that will make no difference to your work as second mate in this ship." He evidently thought that I expected favours, but I had asked for none and had never contemplated doing so.

He came on board again just before eight, obviously having spent the intervening hours in still further enjoyment.

We got under way, and a tug towed us out. It was then blowing a whole gale from the N.E., and was very dark. We were running under lower and upper topsails and foresail. It was my watch on deck, and the captain, who I must say was a splendid sailor when he was all right, went below for a time. When he returned he ordered me to get the main topgallant set and get it set at once, whilst he himself would keep a look-out. I mustered my watch and sent two hands aloft to loose the sail, and after taking all precautions I got it set without splitting it in about half an hour. When I returned to the

poop, I had a surprise, for I found the captain "keeping a look-out" stretched at full length on the deck with the bucket rack for a pillow, sleeping as calmly as a child, and this whilst we were racing down Channel right in the track of shipping at a rate of about twelve knots.

In due course we arrived at Baltimore and began to discharge our cargo. The rails were discharged by horse-power, that is, a horse walking along the quay hauled on a rope rove through blocks, pulling up two rails at a time. One morning I was looking after the rails coming up from the main hatch, when a sling swung the wrong way, with the result that the end of the rails caught under the coaming. I went at once to try to get them clear, and whilst I was doing so the horse walked ahead and pulled my fingers into the block, crushing them and tearing off the nails. In the excitement one of the men pulled out his knife and was just going to cut the wrong part of the rope. Had he done so I must have lost my fingers, but I shouted and shouldered him out of the way, then giving orders for the horse to be backed.

When I went into the cabin to get my hand dressed I met the captain who had just come aboard with a friend in one of his merry moods. Instead of attending to my hand he began to give me a lecture on sobriety, saying that it was a good thing he had seen me in Church the day before, or he would have thought I had been drinking. At this his

friend interrupted him with, "For God's sake stop talking and dress the man's hand."

After my hand was dressed I went to my room, but had only been there a few moments, when the captain came to the door and asked if I did not think I should look better on deck seeing after the work; even if I could not use my hand. I went on deck, and I don't suppose it did me any harm.

At that time there was a system going on in some American ports, including Baltimore, which sailors called "Blood Money." It was a system of collusion between shipmasters and the keepers of sailors' boarding-houses by which the latter would entice crews to desert, which meant that the men forfeited any wages due to them; then, when the ship was ready for sea, the same boarding-house keepers would supply another crew, who no doubt had been enticed to desert in turn. I believe that the money made out of the transaction was shared between the boarding-house keepers and the captains.

In the case of the *Rutlandshire* the cargo was all out and the holds cleared by about 3 p.m., and by 5 p.m. there was not a man left in the ship save the captain, mate, myself, and the steward.

The mate was an elderly man, and I had noticed a boarding-house keeper having a long conversation with him on the Saturday evening; and although I was only a youngster, I tried to persuade him not to go ashore on Sunday. He laughed at the idea of anyone interfering with him; he could look

after himself all right. He went on shore but never came back. I heard afterwards that he had been drugged and shipped before the mast in a vessel sailing on the next day. I believe the reason why I was not interfered with was that the captain knew my father and the owners were friends. Otherwise I might have been shanghaied to make a horrible profit for these unscrupulous scoundrels.

We loaded a cargo of coal for Acapulca, on the West Coast, the vessel being loaded very deep, and, when ready for sea, the new crew, all more or less drunk, including the mate, were brought on board by the boarding-house keepers. The drink resulted, as usual, in a good many free fights before things settled down. The mate, an American Irishman, put on a good deal of swagger, but soon calmed down when he found that it made no impression on me.

We were towed away from Baltimore in charge of a pilot, anchoring about three times, on each occasion the captain and pilot going ashore for about three or four hours, returning pretty well lit-up and certainly not in a fit state to take charge of a ship. I consoled myself with the thought that the master of the tug would look after the ship as well as his tug.

We had been at sea only a few hours when we saw signs of one of those hurricanes for which Cape Hatteras is notorious, and as the ship was loaded too deeply, all hands were put to heaving coal overboard, whilst the ship was reduced to lower topsails,



the sails being lowered down and not made fast. We were at work on the coal for some time, until, owing to the heavy seas breaking on board, more water was going into the hold than coal was coming out, and we were at last ordered to batten the hatches down.

When this had been done I asked the mate if we should go aloft and make the sails fast. The mate went to the captain for instructions and was told that the *Rutlandshire* was no soft-wood American ship. "Set upper topsails," was the order.

I asked the mate if he was really going to obey those orders, considering the state the captain was in. "All the time I'm mate, what the captain says, goes." "All right," I replied, "We'll set the top-gallant sails if you like."

The weather was rapidly getting worse, and about seven o'clock I went to my room, which opened on to the deck, to have a rest and put on some dry clothes. It was not my watch on deck until eight, but I knew it was no use turning in, since I felt we were in for trouble.

About eight o'clock I heard the roar of the hurricane bearing down on us. I went on deck. It was pitch dark. I had to feel my way about and to hang on pretty tight at times to prevent myself being washed overboard. At such a time the helm is usually put up, and the vessel got before the wind; but to our horror, the helm had been down, and the captain himself had run along the deck letting go

the weather braces and bringing the ship across the trough of the sea. We all had to take to the rigging, as for a time the vessel was practically under water. Luckily, however, all the sails blew out of her, Providence being a better sailor than any of us.

We did not know then if any of the crew had been washed overboard or not, but fortunately all hands had managed to get into the rigging with the exception of the captain, who was on the poop.

That was a night not easy to forget. After a time I managed to work my way to the poop, where I found the captain leaning over the rail and moaning in a loud voice, "Oh, my poor wife and children!" The mate also got aft and reported that he would have to go below as his arm had been badly hurt. The carpenter was found unconscious with a bad gash across his forehead, several of the men had been hurt in one way or another, and I seemed to be the only one able to keep the deck, not that my being on deck was much use to anyone, since nothing could be done and the good old ship was just wallowing in the trough of the sea, taking her chance of swimming or sinking.

As I was wet through and had no boots or great-coat on, I went to my room to get a change, but when I got there I found there was nothing left but the bare walls. The door had been torn off, and my bunk, bedding chest, and all my clothes had been washed overboard. Luckily the captain had a slop chest on board (a lot of cheap clothes of all sorts

taken along by a captain to sell to the crew during a voyage), and I went along to the saloon to see if I could get some clothes to change into. All I could find was the captain and the bogey stove, the latter having broken adrift, huddled up together in a corner of the saloon in about three inches of water. The captain was sound asleep with an expression of extreme happiness on his face.

There was nothing for me to do but get back to the poop, and no sooner had I done so than I saw the sidelights of a ship bearing down on us amidships. I rushed back to the saloon, snatched up a blue light, lit it by the cabin lamp, and ran on deck, waving it frantically. The other vessel evidently saw it, for she bore away, passing about 200 feet clear of our stern. She was being properly handled, being hove to under lower topsails and riding the sea nicely.

It was now about 3 a.m., and feeling frozen right through, I went to the saloon to see if I could get out of the cold for a bit. The captain was still lying asleep in company with his friend, the bogey stove, and disregarding him I hunted for something warming. I was fortunate enough to find about half a bottle of brandy in the swinging tray and immediately drank half of that. In the ordinary course of events such an amount of neat brandy would have made me as screwed as an owl, but on that occasion it had no more effect than giving me a very welcome warm feeling inside.

After remaining on deck until about 7 o'clock entirely alone I caught sight of the steward. As it was then daylight, the weather was moderating, and there was nothing I could do anyway, I left the steward in charge and turned into his bunk. It was wet through, but as mine was gone, one bunk was as good as another.

Just as I was beginning to get a bit warm and had stopped shivering, the captain put his head in at the door. Whether he was still drunk or not I cannot say, but on seeing me in the bunk, he said, "Don't you think you would look better up aloft, getting the yards secured and wreckage cleared away, so that we can get another suit of sails bent?"

I was so savage at this cold-blooded remark, considering that I was the only one of the lot to remain on deck during the whole of the hurricane, that I am afraid I was rude in my reply.

"Look here, captain," I said, "I have not been below all night although wet and chilled right through. And I wasn't drunk either."

At this he began to cry and staggered away, saying, "Even you have turned against me." Whether the man was beginning to suffer delusions as a result of drink or not I cannot say, but there is no doubt that there was something wrong somewhere, as his subsequent behaviour ashore will show.

Meanwhile I got up and went after the captain and told him that as soon as we could get some hot



coffee and something to eat I would take the crew aloft and begin clearing up.

About 9 o'clock all the men who were not hurt too much went aloft, and by nightfall we had everything cleared away, fresh sails bent, everything shipshape, and once more were heading down south for Cape Horn.

The poor carpenter had been propped up on a settee in the saloon, and we now had time to attend to him. We sewed up the gash in his forehead with an ordinary sewing needle and twenty stitches of ordinary white cotton. It was a rough and ready operation, but it saved his life. We put a splint and bandage on the mate's arm and doctored the others who had been hurt in one way or another. For myself, I managed to rig up a rough bunk and stuffed a couple of clean sacks with straw for use as a mattress, with a smaller sack for a pillow. For sheets and blankets still further sacks ripped up and sewn together did first rate, and I bought what clothes were necessary.

Neither in fit nor cut did the clothes look like a West End rig-out, but anyway the captain debited me with West End prices, so if I didn't look like a swell, I ought to have done.

The remainder of our passage to Acapulca, beating round Cape Horn, was without incident other than the ordinary bad weather and gales usually to be met in the lower latitudes.

We had fine weather up the West Coast and duly

arrived off the port of Mazatlan, which is, or was at that time, the customs port for Acapulca. We anchored off the shore, and the captain went on shore to report and enter the ship. This seemed to take a long time, for he did not return. On the evening of the third day of his absence I felt I would like to go on shore myself for a walk round and a look over the place. I rowed ashore, and as I had no money I thought the best thing to do was to see if I could find the captain. After searching round the town I ran him to earth at last in an hotel where—need I say it?—he had been doing himself well in the matter of liquor.

The first salute I got from him was, "You have come on shore to spy on me." I assured him that it was nothing of the sort, but that I wanted him to advance me a few dollars so that I could get some things I needed and have a look round the town. He parted up with a little money, but said, "I won't let you go by yourself. I'm coming with you." That was the last thing I wanted, but I had to put up with it.

The natives were always playing about with fireworks, and no sooner had we got outside the hotel than a cracker went off. Immediately the captain's strange mania manifested itself.

"You hear that?" he asked. "I am watched and protected here. That is a signal that I am walking with you. You touch me and see what happens. They will fire again when we get to the next corner."

On getting to the next corner, the captain stopped and said, "Now listen." We waited for about five minutes, but when nothing happened the captain got exceedingly annoyed. "The sons of bitches won't fire," he said, and resumed his walk.

This was pretty boring to me, but I got my chance a few minutes later. The captain went into some house, and as soon as his back was turned I gave him the slip and returned to the ship.

The next day we got under way for Acapulca, where we discharged our cargo of coal. This was done by the ship's crew, my job being running the baskets from the hatch and tipping them into lighters alongside. The weather was intensely hot, and there were generally three or four men down owing to the heat.

When the cargo had been discharged we sailed over to some of the Islands to load log-wood, a jungle wood, used for tanning. Some say it is also used for colouring port wine. Whether this is so or not I do not know, but I do know that it took us three months to load the stuff. We then went back to Mazatlan to clear, and after waiting for two or three days began our passage to Liverpool.

We had a spanking passage round the Horn and up to the tropics. When we were about six weeks from home it was found that our stores had run out, all our provisions being salt pork, hard weevily biscuits, a little tea, and a reduced ration of water. For some reason the stores that should have been

supplied on the West Coast had not been put on board; but we learnt that even being short of provisions could have its funny side. One evening, whilst sitting at "tea," which consisted of hard biscuits, no butter, sugar, or milk, I picked up a spoon, which the steward had put in my saucer by mistake, and, quite unthinkingly, stirred my tea. The mate, who was sitting opposite me, saw the funny side of it. He winked, and we both laughed. At that the captain left the table, saying that he would not be made fun of by his officers.

Every time the precious salt pork was put on the table, which was twice a day, the captain used to praise the darn stuff, remarking what beautiful meat it was; but considering that it had been some years in pickle, the praise was not altogether justified.

One day at dinner (so called) he began to sing the praises of the pork again, whereupon I chimed in with, "I couldn't get my shirt off this morning." "Why?" asked the captain, falling into the trap. "Owing to the pig's bristles growing on my back," I replied. That finished off the captain; he left the table, saying that he would not sit at table with his officers again.

We duly arrived at Liverpool after 150 days' passage. On getting near land we fell in with fishing boats and exchanged some of our lovely pork for mackerel. The fishermen may have enjoyed the pork, but I guess we enjoyed the fish better.



My father knew we were making a long passage, and rightly surmising that we might have gone short of provisions, sent the ship's agents a five-pound note to be given to me on arrival. On anchoring in the Mersey, the captain landed and left the pilot to dock the ship, and was handed the fiver by the agent to give to me. As we were docking, the captain, who was standing on the dockhead, shouted to me, "Your father has sent you £5, but as you won't want it for a few days, I am making use of it." His behaviour was fearful cheek, but I could do nothing, and I did not get any use out of the fiver until we were paid off. I can't write down the language my father used when he heard about the incident.

As soon as we were paid off, I left the ship, having been in her for twenty-two months.

After that voyage I joined a very fine barque, the *Ivanhoe*, belonging to Melbourne and trading between that city and London. After my experiences in the *Rutlandshire* being in this vessel seemed like being in heaven. I was appointed mate in her on the next voyage, being then twenty-three years old.

We used to take general cargo, consisting of fine goods, such as Huntley & Palmer's biscuits, fruits, etc., as well as case goods. Altogether we carried from 1,800 to 2,000 tons.

On this second voyage we were loading in the South West India Dock, and I went one morning

into the lighters lying alongside to see what cargo we were getting, and behold! I came across my old friend, creosote. They were sending us large quantities of timber and wire, all freshly creosoted, and remembering previous experiences, I refused at once to take it on board. This caused a pretty fine to-do. First the shippers came on board and demanded what authority I, as only first officer, had to shut out cargo. I am afraid I was rather rude in my reply, telling them that they could take their cargo somewhere or other, but that it was not going into the *Ivanhoe*, which was loading a cargo of fine goods.

They evidently communicated with the London office, for in a short time the captain and the chief agent came aboard in a great state and invited me into the cabin to explain my conduct, asking what the so-and-so business I had to take it upon myself to refuse cargo. When I had told them of my past experiences with creosote and how it would penetrate through the whole cargo, they also refused it and thanked me for not having allowed it on board. I heard afterwards that four previous ships had refused it, and I suppose that the shippers thought that by getting it alongside early in the morning it would be shipped before anyone was about who knew the nature of creosote.

On this voyage I nearly came to grief, but not in the way you might expect. We used to take twelve passengers from London to Melbourne,

and among them was a very fascinating little widow, about forty-five, and she took a fancy to me, whilst I, being some twenty-two years her junior, soon fell to her charms. This was a great worry to the captain who was a fatherly old man and took a great interest in me, and he and the widow used to have some fine rows when she accused him of interfering in her affairs. We had made up our minds to get married in Melbourne, though goodness knows what we should have done, since neither of us had any money. I should have been out of a job. As the captain refused to pay me off, I should have lost the few pounds due to me, whilst, of course, I should have had to desert.

However, the good old man gave me a fatherly talking-to and finally got me to promise not to do anything this time, but to wait until I got back to Melbourne on the next voyage. That was the end of that romance, for as it happened I did not return to Melbourne. My first owners in London wrote to me saying that they had just bought a new ship, the *Grecian*, lying in Hamburg, and that I could go over and take charge of her. Unfortunately, at that time my father was dying, and I could not leave home. I went to London and explained matters, whereupon I was told to let the owners know when things were settled and then I should have a ship.

After my father had died I called at the office, and the owner told me he would not have a ship

home for six months. He advised me to make another voyage as mate in a new ship, the *Shannon*, just launched at Glasgow, promising that if her captain would change into another new ship when we returned, I should have her. So I went as mate in the *Shannon*, considered one of the finest sailing ships of her time. She was certainly a beauty, carrying about 2,500 tons, a full-rigged ship, fitted with double topgallant sails, royals, and skysails.

At Glasgow we loaded a cargo of water—and drain-pipes and then went down to Greenock and embarked emigrants for Brisbane. The between decks were fitted up with partitions, separating the single men at the forecastle end from the single girls at the other end, the married people being amidships. There were two matrons to look after the girls, who were not allowed to go anywhere about the ship, except the poop deck, a stairway leading from there down to their quarters. They had to go below at sunset and were not allowed up until 8 a.m., the matrons accompanying them below at night and locking the companion doors after them.

After being a fortnight at sea, any girls who had relations on board were allowed to receive them on the poop deck between the hours of 2 and 4 o'clock, and it was not very long before every girl found she had either a brother or male cousin on board, and the poop deck became crowded with male visitors every Sunday afternoon.



In addition to the pipes in the cargo we had four or five hundred tons of Gilbey's wines and spirits, which were stowed in the lower hold under the married quarters and just over the fresh-water tanks. Close to this cargo was a trap hatch giving access to the tanks. Before leaving Glasgow I had asked for filling pipes to be fitted to the tanks and the hatch to be done away with and properly decked over. This had been thought unnecessary; consequently the married people soon found out, or had been informed by some, probably one of the stevedores, about the spirits. They had been very quiet and careful about it, for nothing wrong was found out until we reached the quarantine station at Brisbane, where we were sent to land the emigrants, the doctor having reported measles on board.

The emigrants and their effects were ferried ashore by three of the ship's boats, the captain and the second mate having charge of boats containing emigrants, whilst the third mate's boat contained stores and medical comforts, which included wines and spirits for the use of the doctor. I was left in charge of about half the crew, say, eleven men, to see everything connected with the 400 emigrants properly sent ashore.

I happened to look over the side, and my eye caught two or three empty gin demijohns floating by. I knew at once that there had been a raid on the spirits stored in the hold, so I went below in the between decks, where I did not have to look

very hard to see that the hatch over the water tanks had been tampered with. I immediately called the carpenter and stood over him while he spiked the hatch down with iron spikes, noticing that he had been having something stronger than water and was quite merry.

The next thing to do was to find out how much of the spirits had got into the forecabin, so going to my room and putting a revolver in my pocket, I went forward to the forecabin, where I found all the men more or less drunk. They had no doubt taken advantage of the half hour's spell given them in the middle of the morning to get at the liquor. I walked in among them and began to search, keeping my eyes open in case I was attacked. To my surprise the men were as quiet as lambs, which I put down to the fact that I had always got on well with them. When I began to turn things about, some of them said, "What are you looking for, sir?" "For the drink you have stolen and stowed away in here," I replied. "We will help you," said they, and actually turned their beds over to show me they had nothing in their bunks, lockers, or sea-boots.

There was only the forepeak to search, and I must confess I thought a bit before going down there, lest they should put the hatch on and keep me down there. At last I said, "Who will come down the forepeak with me and have a look round?" One or two said at once, "We will." We went down, but could find nothing, so I came to the conclusion

that the demijohns I had seen were the only ones they had taken forward, since by the spiking down of the hatch they had been prevented from getting any more.

Meanwhile, they were apparently having trouble with the crew on shore, owing to the third mate, who was a bit of a blockhead anyway, having left his boat, which was loaded with wines and spirits, whilst he went for a ramble, the result being that the crews of all the boats had a fine jamboree and got gloriously drunk. I first became aware of the state the crews were in when I saw the third mate's boat trying to row off to the ship, the crew shouting and quarrelling. When they got alongside at last the third mate said that all the crews were in the same condition, and he added that he had been ordered to take more stores on shore. This I refused to allow and had the boat pulled up and put on the skids, so keeping that little lot on board.

Shortly afterwards I saw the second mate's boat coming off, and though the way the boat was being handled was disgraceful, it was rather laughable to watch. Two men were trying to fight, the others were pulling all over the place, and the second mate was trying to steer with one hand whilst brandishing one of the boat's stretchers in the other. They got alongside at last, and we managed to get them on board, whereupon the second mate said that he had been ordered to return with another load of stores. How he thought he was going to manage it,

I don't know, and he was not very clear about it either. So we got the boat pulled up and put on the skids, our party aboard being pretty lively by that time, the fun being added to by a few free fights of "hit the luckiest" type. I will say that when I went among them, trying to quieten things down a bit, not a man thought of interfering with me.

About 6 o'clock the captain's boat came off. This one took a musical turn. Instead of shouting curses and fighting, the men were singing. The captain himself was a trifle merry, having apparently also been sampling the medical stores. We got all his crew out with the exception of one man who refused to come on board. On my telling two of the soberest of the men to go down and fetch him up he started to cry and called out, "Mr. Iron, I do love Maggie Love (one of the emigrants), but she don't care a damn about me. That's why I can't help crying." Things were pretty lively until midnight, when they quietened down and I turned in.

All this trouble could have been avoided if the hatch had been properly secured before leaving Glasgow, and it was a wonder that fire had not broken out during the passage through the people using naked lights when going down the hold among the spirits.

The next morning the crew were sobered up, and the remainder of the emigrant stores were landed under a guard without incident. After completing our fourteen days' quarantine, we went over



to Brisbane and landed our cargo, amongst which were a few hogsheads of rough crockery, consisting principally of bedroom toilet sets. Some of these sets had been left on the wharf during the night, and one hogshead had been broken open and some of the sets stolen. The second officer came in a great state of mind to report the loss in the morning; he was not so much upset about the robbery, but was particularly concerned about certain of the articles, as, as he explained, these all had gold rims.

A funny incident happened in a ship lying close to us. Her captain went on board one afternoon a little the worse for drink and was not long before he had words with his mate. Shortly afterwards we saw him chasing the mate along the decks with a small pair of grains (a sort of two-pronged fork for spearing fish). Eventually he threw the grains and scored a bull's-eye in the seat of the mate's pants. This led to trouble, of course, the captain becoming very frightened and expecting to be sent to prison. The chief stevedore, however, tried to console him by telling him he could not be prosecuted for just sticking the man, and even if he had killed him, they could do nothing to him, for the man was only a mate. However, they managed to get things squared up, also the mate, who exchanged into another ship, before the law, which appeared conveniently slow, could be set in motion.

After discharging our cargo and taking in ballast we sailed for Calcutta, and instead of going to the

south of Australia, went north through Torres Strait. We were trying to make the island of Bramble Key, but owing to fog we missed it, and about noon one day the captain called me from my watch below and said we were in yellow waters. I rushed on deck; there was scarcely any wind, and after a consultation the captain decided to anchor at once. As the ship was scarcely moving through the water, we let go and lowered the sails afterwards. As soon as we brought up, we swung with our stern to the northward.

The weather cleared shortly afterwards, enabling us to take observations, which made our position just off the mouth of the Fly River, New Guinea. This was not very comforting, as at that time the natives were cannibals, and with the exception of one or two revolvers we were unarmed. However, we could not get away as there was no wind and the tide was setting into the river. Fortunately it came on thick again, which prevented us being seen from the shore, and about eight o'clock the next morning a little wind sprang up from the north and we got under way and stood across the Straits.

With the wind freshening, the fog lifted, and we then saw four native canoes rowing hard towards us. They managed to get uncomfortably close to us before we gathered way enough to crawl away from them. The natives consisted of both men and women, quite naked, all of whom were shouting and yelling for us to stop. But we thought it would

be more enjoyable to eat our own breakfast than to make one for them.

We got through the Straits and reached Calcutta in due course. There we embarked coolie emigrants and a cargo of rice for Demerara, and from there loaded raw sugar and rum for London.

On arriving in London, the captain refused to change over to the new ship, so I was kept at home in readiness to go out to the West Indies and take charge of a ship, the *British Peer*, on her way from Calcutta to Demerara with emigrants.

## CHAPTER III

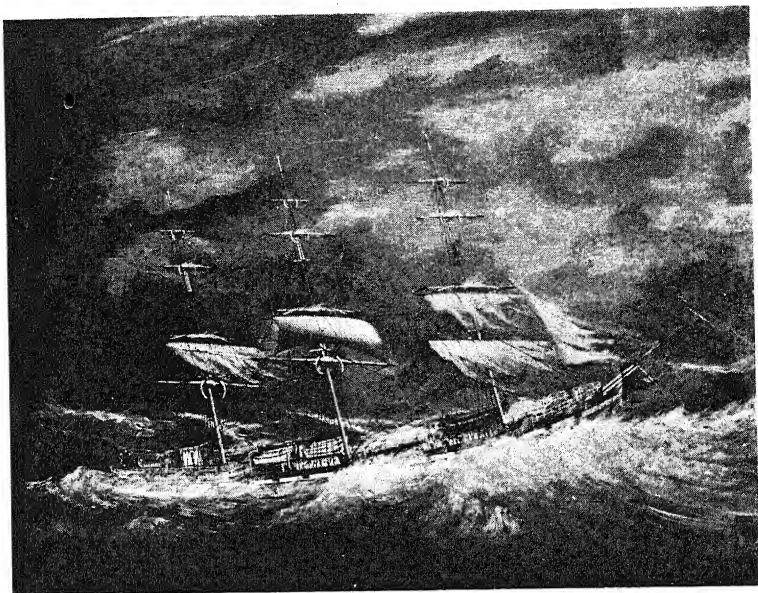
### IN THE EMIGRANT TRADE

AFTER disembarking the emigrants, the *British Peer* was under the command of the Marine Superintendent, the captain being discharged at Demerara, and went hawking rice on owner's account round the West Indies.

I was sent out in one of the Royal Mail boats with orders to go round the Islands until I found the ship. I thought I was in for a good time, but, alas, the good time did not come off. We got into Barbados about 10 o'clock one night, and the first thing I saw at daylight next morning was the *British Peer* anchored close to us. Instead of having a holiday and a cruise it was a case of having to pack my traps and go aboard her.

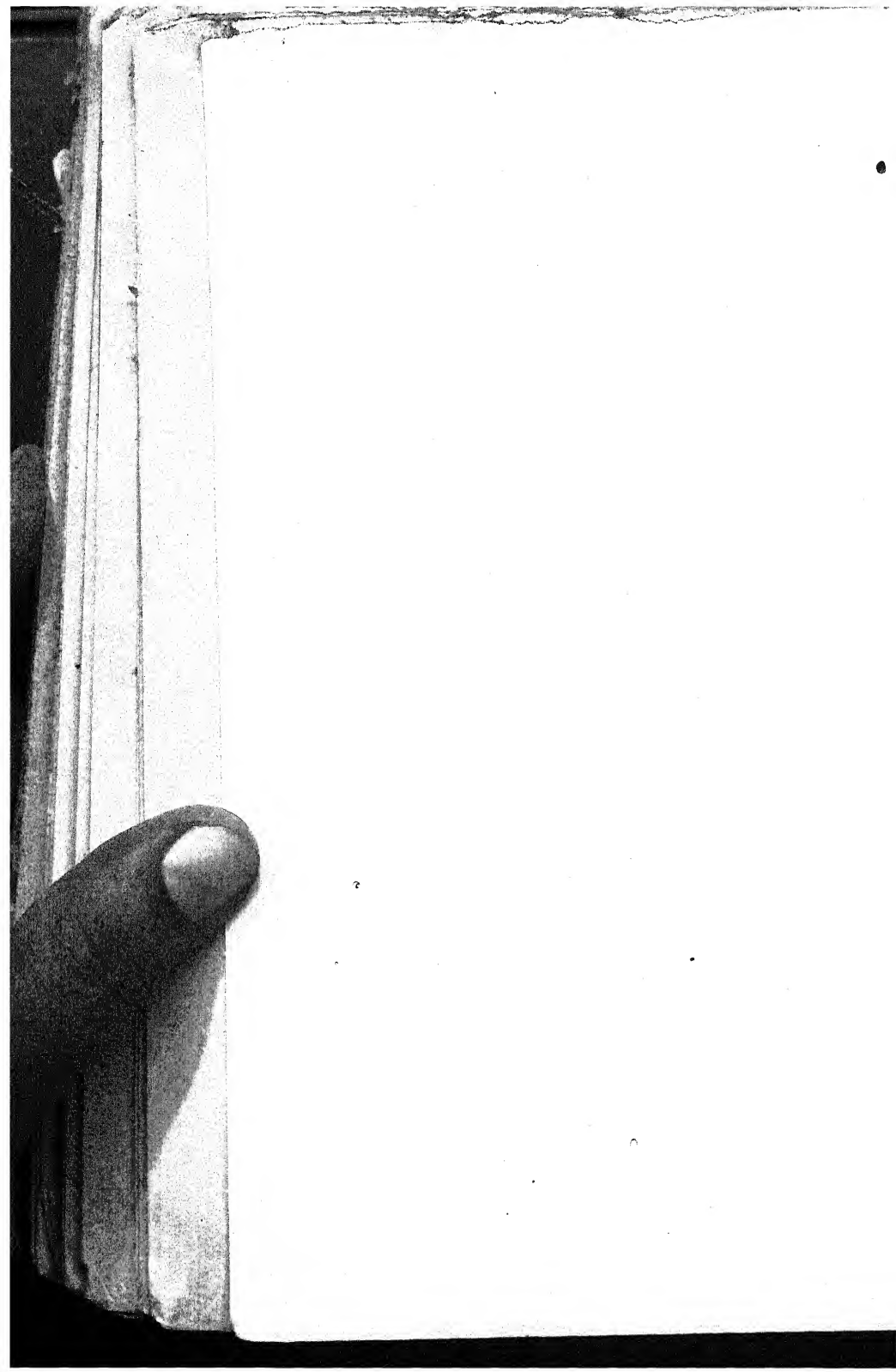
She was a fine full-rigged ship with topgallant sails and skysails of about 2,000 tons, which was a large ship in those days. She carried a lascar crew, and the first person I saw on getting aboard was the old serang, who was with me during my first voyage. As soon as he saw me he became very excited and went round the decks telling everyone I had been with him when "a very little boy" and that he had taught me to become a sailor.





THE "BRITISH PEER" IN A GREAT CYCLONE IN MARCH, 1888  
Which wrecked *Tamatave* and sank two or three men-of-war. From a  
painting in my possession.

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I took charge of the ship from the Marine Superintendent and sailed that same afternoon for Trinidad, feeling very proud of being in command of such a ship at the age of twenty-five. The Marine Superintendent was a Scotsman, whose thrifty trait showed itself when we were going on shore to clear the ship. He took his belongings with him, and on our way to shore pulled alongside a steamer and asked permission to put them on board for a little while. The permission was, of course, granted. After getting away from the ship, the Super. turned to me and said, "That's a wrinkle. When I go back for my things they will ask me to stay the night and I shall save hotel expenses."

I arrived at Port of Spain on Monday morning, and after discharging the remainder of the rice loaded a cargo of green sugar for Delaware, where I received orders for New York.

The practice in those days was to keep about twenty-four 100-gallon tanks, the surplus of coolie stores, lashed on deck, and in them the molasses which drained from the sugar was stored, being pumped up from the bilges by the ship's main pumps. These drainings were the property of the owner, the ship being paid freight on the weight of sugar landed. In this case there were about 10,000 gallons.

After the sugar and molasses had been discharged, the ship was chartered for Calcutta with a cargo of case oil (paraffin). I thought it would be as well to

nurse, came to me and said, "Captain, where are we?" I replied jokingly, "I don't know." He said, "You remember when you were a little boy with Captain Abbot, we got cold weather and see plenty albatross and a little island. Now see no island and get cold weather, but no got albatross. I don't know." The poor old fellow walked away, looking very serious. But the next morning he was waiting for me at my cabin door. "Captain," he said, "everything is all right. I have seen plenty albatross." We finished the passage to Calcutta with no further trouble.

After discharging the oil and loading the hold with rice, we embarked 950 emigrants for Demerara, and then raw sugar for Liverpool.

The next voyage we loaded salt in the lower hold and went to Demerara to embark coolie emigrants homeward bound for Calcutta. Smallpox was raging in Liverpool at that time, and I hoped I should have no trouble, but about the third morning out one of the crew came aft, complaining of pains in his back and sickness. I put him in hospital and gave orders that no one was to go near him but myself. The next morning three more came aft, and they also were put into the hospital, so I had four men to nurse and was very thankful no further members of the crew fell sick. I lost one; the other three recovered. I was very careful not to mention smallpox in the official log, but noted the symptoms as they arose, knowing the quarantine people at



Demerara would know soon enough what the sickness was. They did, and sent me to quarantine for twenty-one days with instructions to have the ship repainted throughout and all clothes and bedding fumigated. Somehow I forgot mine, and it was astonishing how many of the men had their suits spoiled during fumigation and got new ones at the owner's expense.

On being sent to quarantine I cabled the owner and suggested he should substitute one of the other ships and let me proceed to Calcutta, but received the reply, "Cannot substitute. You must lay out your time." I received a letter by the next mail in which the owner told me that though he was old enough to be my grandfather he would not diagnose a case of smallpox. It was in anticipation of such a criticism that I had not mentioned smallpox in the log, and I sent the owner a copy. With the next mail came a letter telling me that he was quite satisfied with what I was doing. That was a relief, for, being such a youngster, I thought he might have come to the conclusion that I was too inexperienced for the job.

After lying in quarantine for the twenty-one days and having painted the ship and carried out all regulations, I returned to Georgetown and gave notice that the ship was ready to embark emigrants; but I was met with the answer that all emigrants and crew would have to be vaccinated first, and as there was not enough vaccine in the colony,

mizen upper topsail yard seventy-five feet in length. The long portion of the broken main topsail yard was just right for a mizen topgallant mast, and one of the other rough spars made a main topgallant mast.

I was fortunate in having a good carpenter as well as four or five Norwegians among the crew, so we set about squaring and shaping the spars; we got them aloft gradually as fine weather allowed, and before we reached the Bay of Bengal we were rigged and in the same condition as before the accident. The ship remained so rigged as long as I was in her, and it was a great satisfaction to me that in spite of the accident we made the passage from the Cape to Calcutta in forty-one days. At Calcutta we loaded a cargo of linseed for London.

In the year 1886 I went to Demerara to embark 1,000 returned coolie emigrants who had completed their time and were being sent back to Calcutta. They had between them a large quantity of valuables, mostly jewellery consisting of sovereigns made into necklaces, some of the women having as many as a hundred sovereigns round their necks. To prevent robbery the jewellery was taken from them for the voyage and given into my charge, a receipt being given them by the owners. As one can imagine, this meant a good deal of work and responsibility for me, as we had no strong room. I always did this work myself, and was very fortunate, for during the many voyages of this kind which I made from

time to time I never had any disputes or lost any articles of value.

On this particular voyage the owner sent me for some reason a chart with the track marked on it which he wished me to take after passing the Cape of Good Hope from Demerara. This track was much too far north in which to run our easting down, and meant that instead of being in the latitudes where we could expect strong westerly winds and gales we should be in latitudes where light winds might be expected.

In his younger days the owner himself had been in this trade; but all the same I wondered why he wanted to interfere with my navigation, especially as it was no new passage to me. I wrote and pointed out that I could not agree and that I expected to make a long passage if I followed his instructions. "But, of course," I said, "if on my arrival at the Cape I do not find word from you countermanding these orders I will obey them. But I cannot be responsible if we make a long passage."

When we arrived at the Cape I found there was no reply to my letter, so I made up my mind to carry out his instructions on the sailor's principle of "Obey orders and break owners."

When I left the Cape I kept to the owner's track, with the consequence that instead of finding westerly gales to bowl us along we toddled along before light westerly and variable winds. If one was yachting this sort of thing would be very nice. At last we

got becalmed and remained so for no less than six weeks. We got short of provisions and had to put the emigrants on one-third rations with a milk-tin of water per head served out twice a day.

I made up my mind to try and reach Trincomali, but as we were crawling up to the Equator the Doctor, who represented the Government as Protector of Emigrants, added to my anxiety (I was only twenty-six years old) by writing me an official letter stating that as we were getting into the track of steamers he must request that as soon as opportunity offered we be towed to Trincomali. My reply to this was to tell the officers that if a steamer was sighted during their watch they need not see her or say anything about it.

But one morning, when abreast of Barticlo, the Chief Officer, whom I am sorry to say I could not trust, not only called me but the doctor as well, having sighted a steamer. I made signal to the vessel, "Emigrants short of provisions." She took no notice of this. I then made the signal, "Will you tow?" and immediately the steamer turned on her starboard helm and stood towards us.

The doctor came to me and asked if I intended to employ her. I replied, "It all depends. I am not going to give half the ship away." "Then I must write you another letter," he said and proceeded to produce a missive saying, "As a steamer is willing to take us in tow I demand that you engage her at any cost."



I put this letter in my pocket and ordered a boat to be lowered. By the rules of the Emigrant Service a captain is not supposed to leave his ship, but as I could not rely on the Chief Officer I went myself in the boat to board the steamer, taking care that the Chief Officer should not be close enough to overhear any conversation. I must own the worry and anxiety were beginning to tell on me and making me a bit nervy.

On my getting close to the steamer a ladder was put down, and when I got up to the rail the captain called out, "Are you all well in that ship?" It was said in a nasty tone, or else in my state of nerves I imagined it to be. In any case I replied gruffly, "If we were not I should not come on board of you." The steamer, incidentally, was a Scottish boat, but I will not mention her name.

Her master then came along the deck and asked what I wanted. I told him I was bound for Calcutta and that we had got a bit short of provisions. I said that as he was presumably bound for Madras and would pass close to Trincomali I wondered if he would tow me that far. "But not to tow me in," I said. "I can try and sail into the harbour myself.

He replied, "I should want half your ship for that. It is about two hundred miles." "No it isn't," I said. "It is just about seventy miles; there is Barticlo just abeam of us." I do not know what kind of a navigator he thought I was, but he looked rather surprised at my reply.

His next proposition was, "I will tow you off Trincomali without any agreement and let the owners settle it at home." "No thanks," I said. "You will say the emigrants were starving and make a claim for life salvage."

"Well, I will go down and look at my charter party," said he. I thought it very doubtful if he had one, but at any rate he left me standing on the deck and did not invite me into his cabin. Soon he came up again and said, "You must accept my terms or remain where you are."

Of course I refused the offer, thanking him. This was the only time I ever begged. I told the man that I had been about six weeks without any fresh vegetables and asked if he could give me a few potatoes. His reply was, "No. We only have enough for ourselves, but I will tow you back to your ship." This was the last thing I wanted him to do, so I thanked him again, telling him that towing me would make him burn extra coal, of which he had probably only enough for himself.

I got into my boat and on getting on board again the doctor asked me if the steamer was going to tow us. I had to reply, "No, he is under time charter at Madras and will not tow at any price."

For this lie I hope to be forgiven, but it was the best thing I could do in the circumstances. Feeling about done by this time I went and shut myself up in my cabin, wondering what I could do next. In about half an hour I heard the Second Officer give

the order to square the crossjack yards, so after bathing my face I went on deck and found a little breeze springing up aft. The breeze freshened quickly and we were soon going along at ten knots, being off Trincomali practically at the same time as the steamer. We sailed into the outer harbour and dropped anchor in twenty fathoms about four o'clock on a Sunday afternoon.

To show the friendly feeling the Indian coolies had for those who treated them kindly, when standing in towards the harbour, several women who were allowed on the poop deck came to me and said, "Captain, why we go in here?" I replied, "You have been very short of food and water for a long time and we are going in to buy food." "Who going to pay for it?" they asked. I replied that I was.

"Then don't go in, Captain. We not want you to spend your money. We can manage until we get to Calcutta."

This is mentioned to show the good feeling which existed between these Indians and myself.

After anchoring I told the doctor what had happened on board the steamer and the terms the captain had wanted for towage. "You would have been foolish to agree," he said. "You wouldn't have said that this morning," I replied. "Here are your letters. You had better tear them up and say no more about it."

After anchoring a boat was lowered and I pulled

up to the town, the doctor coming with me as he said we would have a good dinner ashore.

"Don't make too sure," I said. "Perhaps we shan't find one."

On landing we made for the Governor's house, but were informed that he was at church and would not be home for about two hours, it being then about six o'clock. We went wandering about trying to find an hotel like two orphans in a foreign land. At last a native came running up to us and said he was a merchant and that his name was Shooting Abraham. On enquiring how he got that name we learnt that it had been given to him by the Prince of Wales (after King Edward VII.) when he was in Ceylon shooting elephants. He told us there was no hotel in the place and insisted on our going home with him to have a dinner.

By this time we were feeling pretty hungry and did not mind much where we went so long as we got something to eat. When we arrived at what he called his home, which was only a hut among some coconut trees, we were invited to sit on the grass outside, and in due course we were served with some Cinghalese curry. We tried to make a dinner off this, but I think the mosquitoes made a better one off us. I was well aware that Shooting Abraham's kindness was merely an effort to get my custom.

Before we had left the ship the doctor had written me another of his precious letters informing me that he should refuse to leave the port until a full month's



provisions had been put aboard. About half-past eight I called again at the Governor's house and was received very kindly. After hearing my troubles he said that the Navy stores would be at my disposal, but that they had no rice, which he was afraid would have to be bought by the pound. He also told me that a steamer had gone into Madras and reported that she had spoken a large ship becalmed off the south coast of Ceylon with emigrants starving and the captain had refused his assistance. The authorities had asked the Governor to send a light cruiser to look for her. He said that he would now reply that the ship and emigrants were safe and well in harbour.

To make up the complement of provisions I needed a ton of rice, and buying this quantity by the pound meant paying very dearly. As I had no money I wired our agents at Calcutta to wire me a credit at the bank. In the matter of rice this is where Shooting Abraham came in.

Apparently he had a corner in rice and thought he had got me at his mercy. He started asking me threepence a pound, but finally took three-halfpence. I took about five days to get our stores aboard, and at the end of the third day no credit had arrived. This worried Shooting Abraham very much, for all his rice was aboard and he had not been paid. He asked me to send a telegram for him, and this is what he said, "Honoured Sirs, Please send money quick, quick. Your Humble Servant, Shooting

Abraham." This I knew would cause some amusement in Calcutta.

At last we got away and keeping the strong fair wind, made the Pilot Ridge Light Vessel on the tenth day and took the pilot on board. He brought me a newspaper in which was a long account of my misdoings in having a thousand emigrants on board who were starving whilst I refused assistance kindly offered. I read that I ought to be brought up for trial if it was found that any of the people had died on a charge of manslaughter.

This did not worry me at all, for all the emigrants were in perfect health, and on the passage I had been very fortunate regarding deaths. As a rule we could reckon on twelve deaths and twelve births on a passage, but on this trip we had only six deaths—before the food ran short—and twelve births.

Shortly after the pilot had come on board one of the large Hooghly tugs came up and as I was well known there was a bit of chaff from her captain about the newspaper article. He started with, "I have been looking all over the Bay for your damned ship and the starving emigrants."

"Well, you didn't look in the right place. What do you want to tow me to Calcutta?"

"I can't do it for less than 30,000 rupees."

"You can't? Well, I'll anchor and stay where I am. There will be plenty of tugs here presently."

"What will you give me? You know they are pretty anxious about you in town."

"But I'm not anxious about them. I will give you 12,000 rupees. Take it or leave it."

He at once steamed away as if leaving us, no doubt expecting a signal would be made calling him back. But when he had got nearly out of sight and I had made no signal, he returned, and on finding that I would not give more he took us in tow after using a deal of bad language anent mean skippers. In good time we arrived at Garden Reach and off the emigration depot.

Now the fun commenced. Several swells connected with the Emigration Service boarded us as soon as we were anchored, including the Chief Emigration Agent, the Protector of Emigrants, the Chief Doctor, etc. On coming on board they all showed me extreme coolness and requested me to keep away from the emigrants. They then lined them up and amused themselves by going to each person, men and women, asking if they had any complaints to make. They did not get a single complaint of any kind, rather a remarkable thing when so many people were concerned. After this the ship was put in at the depot and the people landed.

They were then again put in lines and questioned. Still there were no complaints. Then it was arranged to muster them again next morning. But at this the Emigration Agent protested, telling the others plainly that they were doing their hardest to get a complaint so that they could go for me. "I, for one, will not

have it," he said. "The newspapers have been writing a great deal of what should be done to Captain Iron, but I am going to write an article and I shall mention that this is the first time I can remember that there has not been a single complaint from any person on board after making so long a passage. I shall say that on the contrary they all say how well they have been treated." So ended one of the longest passages I ever made to Calcutta.

I remained there for six weeks and took nearly all the same coolies back to Demerara, as most had signed on for another five years.

In reply to my owner's letter about the long passage I referred him to my letter in reply to his sending of the chart and I heard no more about the affair.



## CHAPTER IV

### SUAVE RECEPTION IN SURINAM

WHILST in command of this ship I once took my wife to Calcutta with me, and I was very soon sorry I had done so. I came to the conclusion that the owner was right in not allowing his captains to take their wives with them as a general rule and I must confess I was sorry he had made an exception in my case and had granted me the privilege.

We left Liverpool with a full cargo of salt for Calcutta—there were no emigrants on board on this voyage—in the face of a strong south-westerly wind, and after casting off from the tug at Holyhead we had to beat tack for tack down Channel in a rough sea. By the time we got past the Bay of Biscay my wife was completely prostrated. Once or twice I really thought she would die, and as we had no doctor on board I learnt that it was not all beer and skittles having the responsibility of attending to my wife and working the ship in a gale of wind at the same time.

However, our troubles came to an end as soon as we got into the Tropics and down towards the Equator, and by the time we encountered the bad

weather down South my wife had become a much better sailor. We made a long passage and saw no land for four and a half months and only three other ships.

I was amused the day we were going to make the Pilot Ridge Lightship, which is moored out of sight of land. I had taken observations at noon and I turned to my wife and said, "You will see a lightship about 3 o'clock." She cannot have been very impressed with my navigation, for she replied, "How do you know? We haven't seen anything for nearly three months." "All right," I said. "But I have a sort of feeling we shall see a lightship."

After dinner I laid down and had an hour's sleep, going on deck again at three. My wife was sewing on the poop, and I said to her, "Have you seen that lightship yet?" "Of course not," she replied. "Now listen," said I, and I ordered a man to go aloft and report if he could see anything. He got only a little way up the fore rigging before he reported a lightship right ahead. That gave me the opportunity of teasing my wife, and she seemed very happy at the prospect of getting into harbour once more.

We remained in Calcutta for about six weeks, loading a full cargo of rice for Demerara. After crossing the Equator in the Indian Ocean I found by observations that we had a hurricane travelling ahead of us towards Mauritius, and I knew we were bound to get it when it recurved to the south-east. When we made sail, the glass went down, and on

shortening sail and going slower, it went up, which showed that we were sailing at about the same rate as the centre of the hurricane.

At frequent intervals I plotted diagrams from observation taken of the wind and barometer, and on Sunday morning found the hurricane recurving and coming towards us. We bent a new lower main topsail during the morning, and about 4 o'clock in the afternoon shortened the ship down to the three lower topsails and fore topmast staysail. All the other sails were furled and made fast with double gaskets and the yards trimmed to take the hurricane when it struck us in the port quarter, as, if my diagrams were right, it should do. For some reason my officers were of opinion that the ship should be hove to instead of scudding, but I know that if I had done as they thought another ship would have been missing. I told my wife that it was going to be a dirty night and advised her to turn in about 9 o'clock.

The hurricane struck us about 10 o'clock on the port quarter and at once blew every sail out of the ship with the exception of the new lower main topsail, the sails that had been secured with double gaskets simply going away like paper. The hurricane brought the sea with it, and even on the poop deck it was running over the taffrails, whilst on the main deck the water was at times level with the top of the bulwarks.

I had previously stationed two men at the wheel, and there they had to remain all through the night,

being the only two persons I saw all through the gale with the exception of the steward, who crawled up to me about midnight to tell me that he had found Mrs. Iron trying to get out of the cabin.

I told him to go down and put her into her room and to remain outside the door and prevent her coming out. The steward had also told me that the mate, who was in his room, had told him to let me know that the barometer was down to 27.40 and still falling. I sent a message back for him to go to the devil and take the barometer with him. Of course, the barometer would continue to fall until the centre of the hurricane had passed us, and scudding away with the wind on the port quarter was the only thing to do to keep away from it. Had we gone through it, the wind would have suddenly shifted to the opposite direction, and we would have gone down stern first.

The wind was screeching, and when the steward and I were speaking we had to put our heads in the cowl of ventilator, and even then we could only just hear one another's voices. Although running with the wind, it was impossible to move without holding on to something to prevent being blown over or washed away. The sky was just a mass of olive green with masses of green cloud hurrying past and swirling round us. It was a grand sight and was calculated to make one feel the insignificance of man when contending with the elements.

About 2 a.m. I slipped down to the cabin for a few minutes to see how my wife was getting on,



finding her in her bunk, wet through, while two or three feet of water were washing about in the room. If she was frightened, she did not show it, and after making one or two little jokes to make her laugh I went back on deck, nearly getting washed overboard as I went up to the poop.

I asked the steward where the officers were, and he said he had not seen them. About 4 o'clock in the morning the sky ahead became worse, with rolling masses of green cloud, accompanied by vivid forked lightning, coming towards us. It made me wonder if I had done the right thing by running instead of heaving to on the starboard tack, as my officers had suggested; but I tried to console myself by thinking that nothing more could then be done and that if I had made a mistake, everything would soon be over.

However, it turned out that no mistake had been made; we passed through this mass of green rolling cloud and lightning as if we were passing through a gate, and in a moment we were out of the wind with a beautiful blue sky and bright starlight overhead. The green mass of the hurricane was rolling away astern and, wonderful as it may seem, there was very little sea. During the hurricane we kept the wind on the port quarter, heading about south-east, and we came out of it steering north-west.

The men at the wheel were relieved, the ordinary watches were set, and I turned in for two or three hours. When I looked round after my rest I was very pleased to see that save for a suit of sails being

lost we had sustained very little damage. We soon got everything ship-shape again and proceeded on our passage to Demerara.

On arrival there I thought I would give my wife a change, so we took rooms at the hotel, and during our stay I hired a trap and took her out into the country amongst the sugar plantations. All at once we heard shouting and saw about 300 coolies running towards us. My wife was rather frightened, but I said, "I expect they are some of the emigrants I have brought here." And so they were. They surrounded the trap, and rushing up to me, seized my hands, shouting, "It is our Captain Sahib." They seemed exceedingly glad to see me, and it was some time before we could get away, many of the women beginning to cry as we moved off. No doubt the sight of the captain of the ship that had brought them over the sea reminded them of their homes.

At Demerara we loaded a full cargo of green sugar for Liverpool, and on arrival there the owner was waiting for us on the dock. Almost his first words to me were, "Well, boy, you have got to be away again in ten days. You are to go to Surinam for return emigrants, and you will have to be careful because we are going to load salt in the lower hold and so put you down to twenty feet, and you cannot see the light on the lightship at the entrance to the river outside twenty-four." I replied, "What about the new ship you promised me?" "You shall have one next time," said the owner. "The fact is, the Dutch

have not been keeping their agreement with the coolies, and none has been returned home for some years. No one seems to know quite what to do, but you are no stranger to the work; so you will have to go. As it is, I have been only able to let you take 450 people instead of 900."

Well, we left for the precious place, and in due course arrived off the river about 8 o'clock one evening. Although I stood in to twenty-four feet, I could see nothing, so I anchored and went up into the mizen top, whence I could just make out a small light abeam from which I took a bearing. At daylight I stood in towards it, and then the fun began.

I made a signal to the Lightship asking what water was on the bar. They dipped their ensign, which I took to mean, "Come on," but at once touched and had to make sail and drive the ship into deep water again. While I was doing this, the Lightship signalled, "Anchor immediately." But I was not so big an ass as to do so until I was well afloat again.

After anchoring I sent one of our boats away to the ship to get a pilot, and in due course the boat returned with a native. I asked him what they meant by dipping the ensign when I asked what water they had. His reply was rich.

"Well, captain," he said, "the rats have eaten our signal-book, and we thought by dipping the ensign you would stop."

"And what did you mean by telling me to anchor when on the bar?" I asked.

"I told our captain that was the wrong signal," said the man. "We meant to tell you to send a boat for a pilot."

There was no harm done so far, and we could not go in until the following morning, but I knew that we were in for some fun, especially as the pilot told me such a large ship had never been to Surinam before.

The next morning we got under weigh and stood into the river, anchoring off Fort Amsterdam for Customs clearance. No one seemed to trouble about us, and the native pilot said that his job was finished and that he would be relieved that evening by a Dutch pilot. The Fort paid no attention to us. After waiting until about 10 o'clock on the next morning I thought it was time to wake someone up, and I told the pilot that I was going to the Fort, and that he was coming, too.

He was very frightened and said that we must not leave the ship until it pleased some of the officers from the Fort to come on board. Although my reply was to tell him to go to hell, I made him come in the boat with me. As soon as we reached the Fort about half a dozen officers and soldiers came rushing down to the boat and appeared to be very angry with us for coming on shore without leave. Perhaps it was just as well that I could not understand what they were saying to the pilot, but it appeared to be pretty bad, for they accompanied their words with punches, and pushed the fellow about a good deal.



However, it all ended with our getting our clearance and my having iced drinks in the officers' mess.

On returning on board I told the new pilot that I thought the ship was too large to sail up the river and that he had better let her drop up stern first with the anchor over the bows.

He was very indignant at this and assured me that there was plenty of room to sail her up. So we started, and in about half an hour took a sheer and ran aground at the side of the river close to a sugar plantation; in fact, we were so close in that the canes were almost touching us. I reckoned that we would not hurt, as the bottom was only soft mud, but we had not been there long before the canes parted and a head appeared. The head said to me, "Captain, in a little while your ship will turn right over," and vanished.

I thanked the vanished one for his information and ran a kedge anchor out aft and pulled the ship into the river again. Thus ended the first day.

Next morning we got under weigh with a strong, fair wind and all sail set, but we were hardly moving, I called the pilot's attention to the strange fact, saying that we ought to be doing about ten knots instead of two. He tried to explain that it was on account of the strong current. That was ridiculous, and the explanation of the mystery was not long in being forthcoming. A boat full of soldiers and officers came alongside, and when the military had scrambled on board they told us very excitedly that we had

got the Governor's telephone cable on our anchor and had broken it away from each side of the river.

I could not help seeing the funny side of this affair, but told the officers that I was very sorry, explaining that as there were no marks about showing a cable I did not know there was a cable in the river. I pointed out that it was up to the pilot to avoid cables, whereupon they turned their attention to him and went so far as to spit at him and kick him, until I thought it time to intervene and protect him from this treatment.

The soldiers then returned ashore, but came back after a short interval to ask me not to cut the cable, but to cut away the anchor, saying that the Governor would give me a new one. I replied, "If you will only let me alone, I'll tow the cable to Surinam for you." They did not realise that this was "sed sarkastick," and got very excited; but the moment they were clear of the ship I took in all sail and told the mate to heave up the anchor and throw the cable clear.

When this had been done, we anchored, putting a kedge out aft, as in the position we were in there was no room for the ship to swing. So ended the second day.

We started all bright and cheery the next morning, not knowing what the day would bring forth, but the first thing we did on heaving up the kedge anchor was to find the blessed telephone cable foul of it. There were some soldiers grappling for it a short

distance away, and we shouted for them to come and get it; but they refused to take any notice, doubtless feeling that they had had enough of us, so we threw it off, hove up the bow anchor, and proceeded under sail.

We made good progress and I really thought we should at last reach Surinam, but no, the pilot put us ashore again. He certainly did give us a change, for this time he chose the opposite bank. It was quite simple for him to put us ashore, but this time it was another matter getting her off, so there was nothing for me to do but commandeer the pilot's boat and make his crew row me up to Surinam, about four miles away. The sun was beating down and it was terribly hot. By the time we arrived I was feeling sick and faint and was wishing Surinam and all connected with it to the devil.

I went to our agent, one of the boat's crew showing me the way, but he did not seem at all pleased to see me, since I had disturbed his afternoon's sleep. In my turn I did not mince matters and am afraid that I did not treat him with the respect he seemed to expect.

At that time there was a good sized paddle-steamer there named the *Curacoa* which was used for taking mails to and from Demarara in connection with the mail boats. She was used as well as the Governor's yacht. There was also a gentleman holding the office of Minister of Marine.

I told our agent that I must have the use of this boat to tow me afloat and up to the port. He shook

his head and said, "The Governor's yacht could not be used for such a purpose." But after a few hard words from me he agreed to take me to the Minister of Marine, who, it must be said, was even more shocked than the agent at hearing my request. I then told the agent to take me to the Governor, but at this suggestion he nearly fainted and said he could not possibly do such a thing. "All right," I said. "I'll go myself," whereupon he said he would come with me, but that I must take all the blame if the Governor was angry.

I found the Governor to be quite a nice old gentleman dressed in blue and gold. I told him of the trouble experienced in coming up the river and said if I could not have the *Curacoa* to tow me afloat and up to the town and, after embarking the emigrants, down to sea again, free of all charges, there was only one alternative, I should have to drop the vessel down to Fort Amsterdam, whither they would have to get their emigrants as best they could.

His reply was, "Certainly, you shall have the boat, and I will give instructions that she is to be under your orders." After thanking him, I ordered the boat to be down at my ship by 8.30 the next morning, and then I rowed back to the ship. On arriving on board I was feeling anything but well and in none too good a temper, and I was not made to feel any better by the precious pilot's demanding payment for the use of his boat. I made a rush at him, and he flew forward. I saw nothing more of him that night. After



a good night's rest I felt all right again, and the *Curacoa* turned up next morning sharp at 8.30 and towed us afloat and up to the town.

On anchoring I gave notice that I was ready to embark emigrants, but was promptly informed that there were no emigrants ready. They told me that they had thought it useless to collect them until the ship actually arrived, for if she had been lost on her way, they would not have known what to do with them. It would take three weeks to muster the emigrants, but I told them that that was a matter they could settle with the owners; meanwhile they could inspect stores. Samples of all stores had to be arranged in the between decks and inspected by the emigrant authorities. On the day of inspection six gentlemen came aboard, and one of them was particularly zealous. He tasted everything, including rice, sugar, tinned mutton, and at last coming to a tin of mustard oil, took a spoonful. This was too much for him, however, and rushing on deck, he disappeared. I never saw him again.

On receiving the charter party from home I was surprised to see we were fixed up for only 450 emigrants instead of 1,000, and were only supplied with stores for that number from Surinam to Calcutta. I set about thinking how I could get over the difficulty, and when I had put a scheme together I went, all smiles to the Governor, with whom I was now very good friends, and after talking a little, brought up the subject of the emigrants,

asking him if there were not more than 450 they would like to be rid of. "Oh, yes, of course," he said, "but you can only take 450." When I explained that my usual complement was a thousand he said that he would call a meeting, and invited me to attend.

The meeting was held at the Governor's palace, and I was soon asked how I proposed to deal with a thousand emigrants when provisioned for only four hundred and fifty. I had already thought this out, so had no difficulty in answering the question. I pointed out that Cape Town was less than half-way to Calcutta, and that I should have enough stores to take a thousand emigrants that distance. I could make arrangements to pick up sufficient stores at Cape Town to complete the voyage, and I said that I would give them a written undertaking to that effect. The meeting was adjourned for two days for my proposal to be considered. At the end of that time I was again invited to the palace and was told that it had been decided to give me a thousand emigrants on certain conditions. The conditions were that I should take with me twelve lunatics and twelve lepers whom the colony was anxious to get rid of.

I agreed, but made certain conditions on my part. The ship was to receive £13 for each soul landed alive, no freight being paid on any that died on the voyage, even if the death took place whilst the vessel was alongside the depot at the

end of the passage. My conditions regarding the lunatics and lepers were that if any died when a third of the passage was completed, the ship was to receive a third of the freight, if half of the passage, half of the freight, and if three-quarters of the passage, all the freight. To my surprise, this was agreed to, and the terms were embodied in letters. I thereupon cabled home, telling the owner what had been done and asking for the stores to be awaiting my arrival at the Cape.

At last the time came for embarking, and I was asked to bring the ship alongside the landing stage, a very weak jetty extending into the river. This I refused to do, knowing that there was every chance of the ship pulling the whole structure down, when, of course, we should have to build a new one. I got the agent to accompany me to the Minister of Marine, and putting on my best manners and showing great respect for his high office (looking after one old paddle-boat), I requested the loan of the *Curacoa* for embarking the emigrants. In vain. All my best behaviour was wasted; in fact, the Minister was so wrath that I fully expected to be challenged to a duel, and I was told that I was downright insulting when I asked for the Governor's yacht for embarking "dirty emigrants."

Back I went to my friend the Governor, explaining that if I did as I had been asked, he would probably see ship and jetty going down the river in company, and that in any case the ship could

take no responsibility for any damage done. I said I could take the emigrants in three trips, that I would be responsible for them whilst in the yacht, and that as soon as they were aboard my ship the yacht could tow us to sea, when we should be no further trouble to him.

He thought it a very good plan, and we arranged to begin operations at 8.30 the next morning. When the time came I saw the old craft going to the pier, so I lowered my boat and boarded her, immediately meeting the Minister of Marine, who was pacing the deck like a madman.

The moment he saw me, he rushed up to me and demanded: "What in hell have you been doing, sir?"

"What's the matter with you?" I replied. "Didn't you sleep well last night?"

"If I were the Governor, I wouldn't let you have my yacht."

"Well, you're not the Governor, but the Governor's servant, and you must damn well do what he tells you," said I.

Funny, but after this incident a sort of coolness sprang up between us.

However, we got the emigrants aboard, were towed to sea, and proceeded on our voyage with only one small incident. Two of the lunatics jumped overboard, but we picked them up, and neither displayed any wish to repeat the experiment.

At the Cape I found the stores I had asked for



waiting for me, together with a flattering letter from the owner, which ended up, "You can now see what a difference it would have made if a stranger, knowing nothing about the coolie trade, had been sent in the ship." It was very nice of the owner to flatter me, but I did not notice that it made any difference to me in a material way.

A very strange incident occurred on this passage. We were running the trades down, and according to my custom in fine weather I used to turn in for the night. One night about 2 a.m. the Chief Officer knocked on my door and said, "Please, sir, will you come on deck? The man at the wheel has seen something." I went up and asked the man, who was visibly shaking, what he had seen, and he replied, "I saw someone dressed all in black, and he walked three times round the cabin table." (The man could see down into the cabin through the skylight from the wheel.) "He came up through the skylight, gave three taps on the taffrail and jumped overboard."

The man obviously thought he had seen a ghost, but I was not allowing that sort of thing to be encouraged, so I replied heartily, "Well, if the man in black has jumped overboard, he's clear of you. What are you afraid of?"

He could not say, but he was in such a state that he had to be relieved. I then noticed that the Chief Officer was almost as bad, so I told him to come into the cabin and have a little grog. "No, thank

you, sir," he said. "I would rather not come in the cabin." After telling him that he was as big a fool as the other one and pointing out that I had been in the cabin all the time I went back and turned in again. On thinking the affair over I came to the conclusion that the man had been dozing at the wheel and dreamt what he thought he saw.

We duly arrived in Calcutta, whence we took another batch of coolies and a cargo of rice to Demerara, going up from there to New York with sugar. At New York I received a private letter, telling me that there would shortly be a vacancy at Dover and that I stood the best chance of securing the appointment of Harbour Master. I was advised to give up sail and go in steam so as to keep closer home. I, therefore, resigned and returned to England.

## CHAPTER V

### COMING DOWN TO A ONE-HORSE CAB

I WAS offered command of one of the Bailey & Latham steamers, but as I had never been in steam before I asked Mr. Bailey to let me go mate for two voyages before taking command. His reply was, "Damn it, man, they that can go crooked can go straight." "Not always," I replied. He agreed with a laugh that that was true.

I went mate for two short voyages, and was then given command of a new steamer and remained in that position for three years. At the end of that time the office of Harbour Master at Dover became vacant, and I secured it—just forty-three years ago.

My first voyage as mate in steam was in a steamer with a deep well deck between the bridge deck and forecastle head, and one day when crossing the Bay of Biscay, when we were pitching into a heavy sea which was filling up the well deck, the tarpaulin of No. 1 hatch started to wash adrift. I called for a volunteer to come down with me and secure it, and a big Yorkshireman came. Just as we had got on the tarpaulin there came a cry from the bridge, "Look out for yourselves!" and

we jumped for the bulwark stanchions, wrapping our arms and legs round them, whilst the sea came tumbling aboard. For some seconds we were quite under water. When it had cleared away we went on with our work, but I noticed that the man with me kept on laughing.

"Did you see anything comical in that sea to make you laugh?" I asked. "No, sir," replied the man, "but I was thinking of what my missus said when I left home the other night. She kissed me and said, 'Good-bye, Tom; you have all the luck. Nothing to do but go to sea and enjoy yourself.' When we were under that sea just now, sir, I thought of her words."

I made one more voyage as mate. It was from London to St. Petersburg, and the first night out, crossing the Dogger Bank, it was blowing and raining hard. It was my watch, and I was standing under the lee of the Dogger when the captain, a pompous sort of man, came up to me and said, "What would you be feeling like, with it blowing like this, if you were in your old sailing-ship?"

I replied, "It would be much more comfortable than on board here."

"What difference does it seem to you?" he then asked.

"I feel like a man who has always been used to driving a coach and four coming down to a one-horse cab."

He said no more and went into his room, leaving me to smile to myself.



## CHAPTER VI

### DOVER IN PEACE AND WAR

FROM time immemorial Dover has been known as the Gateway of England. To us Dover is, of course, a water-gate, but legend has it that in the dim and distant past there was a causeway between Dover and Calais.

Geologists and other scientists have assured us—and they back their assertions with arguments we have no reason to disbelieve—that the British Isles were once part of the mainland of Europe and some have suggested that these islands were formed by a sudden and catastrophic burst through of the sea. They say that although this event took place countless thousands of years ago the fish have not yet heard of it, and I believe it is a fact that fish in the North Sea find their way into the Bay of Biscay by way of the North of Scotland.

The fact that other scientists say there is no reason to doubt the causeway legend tends to cause us to discredit the story of a sudden break through, except, perhaps, of the causeway itself.

The old legend tells that there was once a king of the country which is now England and France

who had no need to cross the narrow sea to travel from one end of his kingdom to the other, but he is, perhaps, a little too legendary. Those geologists who allow that there was a causeway maintain that it existed before the coming of man upon the surface of the earth. Whether the human race ever walked upon the causeway which connected us with the mainland of Europe or not, the very first voyagers between these islands and that mainland used Dover as their gateway for a very simple reason, namely, that the passage between the points where Dover and Calais now stand was the shortest.

Through this gateway passed all commerce and culture and, of course, the means of war. As I know from my own experience, school-books are apt to give us the impression that until the coming of the Romans the Britons were a very wild and uncivilised people; but the fact of the matter is that the passage of Dover had linked them up remarkably closely with the nations of Gaul and there was considerable and quite effective passage of culture.

The school-books, too, give the impression that the Romans had not heard very much about the Britons before Cæsar suddenly took it into his head to conquer them, but there is little doubt that the Britons had been a thorn in the side of the Romans for something like three centuries before the coming of Julius Cæsar. Already fairly handy with ships and certainly handy with weapons of war,

the Britons had lent aid to the Gauls in their various wars on the Romans, and it was almost certainly due to the trouble caused to Rome by British help of the Gauls which eventually decided Cæsar to look into things over here. The "wildness" with which we associate the Britons of that time in our minds is readily explained. Our forefathers did not wear elaborate armour like the Romans; to even the most ignorant legionary they may have appeared a bit uncouth, but I am inclined to think that the idea of invasion made them wild.

However, the traffic which passed through the Gateway in those days was not all of a troublesome kind. Tin was brought up from the West country, cattle from various parts, and though a good deal of this traffic passed across the sea from the Solent and the coast of Essex, Dover had its fair share.

There is evidence that Dover was protected by some form of fortress by those early people and it must have been a place of great apparent strength, although, probably of actual strength too, for when Cæsar reached Dover in August, 55 B.C., even he does not appear to have liked the looks of what was waiting for him. He could probably see a massing of warriors on the spot where Dover Castle now stands and one is not being unreasonable in supposing the existence of a hill-fort either of stone or earth.

In any case the Romans did not like the looks of Dover and that year did not put up much of a show

further south where they managed to effect a landing. The sea, too, which Victor Hugo says the English firmly believe to fight on their behalf, also took a hand, and the Romans withdrew.

When they sent another army of invasion in May, 54 B.C., they made no attempt to touch Dover, but landed between Sandwich and Deal in a bay which is now represented by sand-dunes and marsh.

When they eventually subdued Kent they placed a garrison at Dover, but that they built a fortress on the site where Dover Castle now stands is doubtful. Although Cæsar is given the credit of being the original founder of the Castle there is little evidence to back up the assertion. The tributary British monarch, King Mandubratius, was established at Dover and certain buildings were erected there, but no remains exist to give definite proof of the foundation of the castle.

Within the precincts of the present Castle can, however be seen a very interesting Roman relic—the Pharos. There was trouble in Britain about A.D. 50 and amongst the many forts and other buildings then erected as aids to the quelling of the rebellious Britons was a fortification on the hill of Dover and the Pharos, or lighthouse. This was built by the Roman general, Aulus Plautius.

Lighthouses do not appear to have been necessary to the Britons who used the Dover passage, but in order to guide the Roman vessels employed to bring stone for building purposes from Gaul Aulus Plautius



erected his Pharos of tufa blocks or slabs obtained in the locality. There was also a Pharos on the other side of the Strait.

This lighthouse was strengthened and raised from time to time in after years and though at the end of the fifteenth century the outer part had almost entirely fallen into decay, the centre part, erected by the Romans, was still sound and solid.

There were not then, nor were there until Plantaganet days, any harbour works. The ships which used Dover and the ships of the passage were of a size which could more or less readily be hauled on shore should stress of weather demand their taking shelter. The sea which had been receding for many centuries then began to return, and as there was considerable danger of the erosion undermining important buildings a wall, the "Old Wyke," was built.

This wall had two effects. The first was a loud outcry on the part of the burgesses of Dover. In order to raise money for the wall's maintenance the Corporation levied dues on the people, and their resentment at last reached Royal ears. As a result the people of Dover were granted free wharfage of their vessels in perpetuity.

The second effect of the building of the wall was the formation by the sea of a little bay, which proved very useful to shipbuilders. Henry VI. encouraged these shipbuilders, and for many centuries they flourished, providing ships for the Dover passage.

Dover then began to fall on rather evil days. The "Old Wyke" was useful in fair weather, but there was next to no shelter for vessels in foul. Moreover, the port of Sandwich had done considerable harm to Dover, whose prosperity was fast falling into decline. Dover's chance came, however, when Sandwich began to silt up in the fifteenth century, and accordingly the authorities of Dover pulled themselves together and made a bid for a return of fortune by the construction of the Western Harbour.

Amongst those who interested themselves in Dover and was anxious that it should be a satisfactory port was Henry VIII. In this time very great improvements were put in hand, and he also intended to build a great pier or mole, 1,400 feet long, to shelter the harbour mouth and prevent silting up. Unfortunately his interest died before the work could be completed, or possibly he found it more expensive than had been anticipated. In any case, the pier was not completed, and though Dover had been greatly improved in other ways, the pier proved more of a disaster than a blessing for it acted as a shingle-trap and caused the silting up of the mouth of the River Dour.

From time to time appeals were addressed to the Crown on behalf of the people of Dover and projects were discussed. But it was Queen Elizabeth who took the matter firmly in hand. So practical a woman was certain to see the importance of Dover as a port that could be used at any time, and having

ordered an exhaustive enquiry to be made, she raised funds and employed the best men to be found on the construction of the "Great Pent." The work was successful, and the waters of the Pent,<sup>or</sup> reservoir scoured the channel admirably.

On one occasion a sluice gate was broken, and within a few days it was impossible for a ship to enter Dover Harbour. But within a few hours of the repairing of the sluice gate a vessel of 300 tons was able to pass in and out.

But Dover still had its ups and downs. Those were troublous times in England and there was no continuity of policy. On the passing of Elizabeth little more was done, and once again Dover Harbour was in difficulties. No repair work was carried out. Storms tore the works about, and mud and sand were allowed to close up the Pent. At one time the authorities appear to be determined to allow the Pent to become dry land once more in order that they could build upon it and enjoy the rents therefrom.

When Charles II. came over to England at the Restoration he was unable to enter the harbour and had to land in a boat. This fact seems to have impressed him, for he raised money for Dover's benefit, and with it a certain amount of repairs were affected. Then for many years little more than tinkering was done.

A whole volume could be written about the vicissitudes through which Dover has passed. In fact, a

thoroughly complete history has been written by our Chief Librarian, Mr. J. Bavington Jones; but it is not in my province to give more than a very rough outline.

Dover began to rise to its present place of importance in 1847 when the great Admiralty Pier was begun. From then on an enormous amount of money has been spent and the bay has been enclosed in such a manner that no less than twenty battleships, besides smaller naval craft, can be moored in shelter, and surely no greater justification of the great project is needed than the part Dover was able to play in the Great War.

I think it is greatly to the credit of our forefathers that in spite of the very great difficulties they had to contend with the Dover passage was maintained with almost clockwork-like regularity for century after century. Often war itself did not stop the traffic. During the Civil War the passage was maintained, and even when we were at war with France in 1744 there was communication between Dover and Calais for the convenience of those nationals who wished to return to their own lands. War does not seem to have borne so hardly on non-belligerents in those days.

The French Revolution closed the passage for a time, but, as is hardly necessary to say, there was a good amount of illicit carrying of passengers between England and France. I am sure the seamen of Dover did no disservice to humanity when they



assisted aristocrats and others to escape the Terror, even if the passage was officially closed.

The Franco-Prussian War did not close the passage, but, of course, the Great War did. Dover was then exclusively a naval base.

In a subsequent chapter I shall describe my coming to Dover as Harbour Master and my duties in that capacity. In the meantime here are one or two stories intimately connected with Dover Harbour.

On September 16th, 1918, Dover experienced the greatest thrill of anything that happened during the War and, it can now be said, very nearly came to destruction, or at all events to a disaster of the first magnitude.

I do not know whether to say that I am sorry or glad that I was not there; but it happened that I was taking a short holiday at my favourite Buxton, so I only know what happened from what I heard when I got back to Dover. An eye-witness told me that suddenly a most terrific explosion occurred. The earth shook violently and it seemed as if all the buildings were coming down on the heads of their occupants.

Although many people in Dover thought, and quite naturally, that the Germans had begun to shell the town with heavy calibre guns from somewhere or another, others more in the know and being able to distinguish explosion from shell-fire guessed at once what had happened, namely, that there had been an explosion in one of our ships lying in the harbour.

Over the harbour there billowed an enormous mushroom of smoke, and at the bottom of the mushroom's stem was H.M. Monitor *Glatton*. One of her magazines had exploded—why was never discovered—and she was on fire.

Within a few minutes the salvage tugs were alongside and were pumping water into her. Meanwhile, other tugs were taking in tow a large ship full of ammunition which was lying close to her.

The explosion in *Glatton* had taken place in the after part and a number of men had been killed. Under the orders of the Admiral, Sir Roger Keyes, attempts were made to flood and sink the vessel, but some of the flooding keys could not be found and the Admiral thereupon decided to have her torpedoed. How that was done, lest another and worse explosion should occur in the monitor, has been most vividly described by Sir Roger Keyes himself in his memoirs. H.M.S. *Glatton* turned over keel upwards and sank in the harbour, where she lay for eight years, a lighthouse being erected on her "blister" as a warning to craft using the harbour.

During the days that followed the loss of the monitor I often wondered what would be her fate eventually and puzzled how she would be got out of the way. I did not think then that it would fall to my lot to have the job.

There were a great many people who said that *Glatton* never could be salvaged, and would stay where she lay for ever. But as time went on *Glatton's*

presence became more and more of a nuisance, and at last the Admiralty began seriously to consider her removal. They consulted many authorities. They themselves thought it would cost about £60,000; the Liverpool Salvage Association said £45,000; many salvage firms would not have anything to do with the job at any price.

Eventually I was asked if I could estimate. My sum was considerably lower than any of the others; it was £5,000. However, I have to confess that I underestimated the full extent of the job, for I did not reckon in having to deal with many thousands of tons of mud which had accumulated in the sunken monitor; but in any case my final sum was far below that suggested by anyone else, for the bill came in the end to about £12,000.

The work was started in May, 1925, the first step being to have a general survey by divers to ascertain the position and condition of things under water. *Glatton* was found to have turned over to an angle of sixty degrees and apparently to be resting on the barrette of the starboard six-inch gun, the upper edge of the boat deck, and the top of the conning tower. Before this could be fully ascertained we had to clear away 12,000 tons of mud which had collected under the decks, between the port gunwale and the ground. We did this with centrifugal pumps.

The tripod mast, four feet in diameter, of half-inch steel, and the two struts, two feet in diameter, were found to be buckled into a V shape, but were

not broken. To clear these away we had to cut them through with acetylene submarine cutting apparatus, and the strengthening bars inside had to be blown away with small charges. The funnel and the bridge had to be cut away by the same means, and everything cleared away that extended below the armoured conning tower, which was then thirty-five feet below low water neap tides.

Eight pairs of nine-inch wire ropes had then to be passed under the wreck, and in some places we had to get our divers to cut tunnels with water jets fifty-two feet long.

I knew that it would be impossible to raise the ship using lifting-lighters alone and made preparations to use compressed air. Briefly, this means closing all apertures through which air can escape from a sunken vessel, then pumping in air and so forcing out the water until the vessel has a certain amount of buoyancy of her own.

At that time not a great many vessels had been raised by means of compressed air, and, with the exception of the Italian warship *Leonardo da Vinci*, the monitor was the largest vessel on which this method had been tried. Since then, of course, the sunken German battle-cruisers in Scapa Flow have been so successfully raised. I was, therefore, somewhat in the nature of a pioneer, and many salvage experts were hardly encouraging to me. Though they wished me the best of luck they said it in such a way as to tell me they didn't think I was going



to get any. Some were, perhaps, more outspoken. They used to tell me—in the friendliest fashion—that I would never do it. However, I had thought it all out very carefully and made detailed calculations, and though I often got a bit impatient I never seriously thought I should be defeated.

The difficulty of getting air all through a vessel with so many watertight compartments was overcome by fitting a four inch airpipe the entire length of the wreck, between the bulge and the shell plating, with branch pipes leading from it into as many compartments as possible, capable of taking air at the rate of seventy thousand cubic feet an hour.

All the manholes on the "open to the sea" bulge were closed and made perfectly airtight; all the light-ports in the port side were closed by steel plates; all hatches, skylights, ventilators, doors, etc., on the portside as far as the centre line of the monitor were also closed and made airtight by the divers. The barbette of the six-inch port midships gun, the gun muzzle, sight holes in the barbette, etc., were also made as airtight as possible.

A trial was then made with air which was pumped into the wreck at the rate of 70,000 cubic feet an hour by two compressors, and on getting ten pounds pressure it was found that the wreck had a decided tendency to right herself.

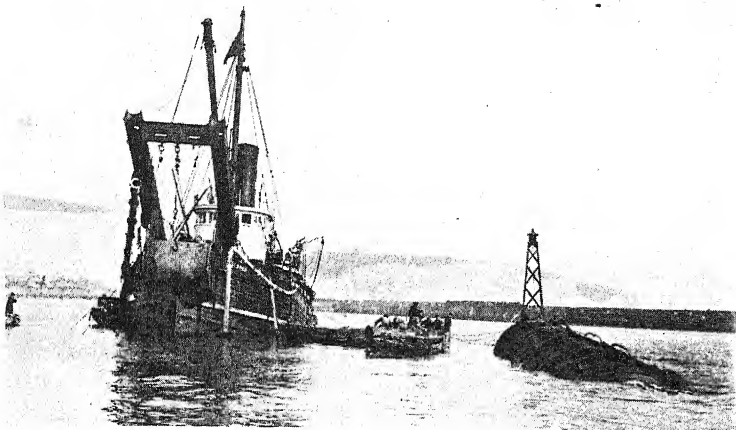
In all salvage work carried out in this way this tendency is encountered. As long as the wreck remains bottom up all is well, since air cannot

escape through her bottom, but if she begins to right herself she will raise some part through which air can escape. Salvors in Scapa Flow had a great deal of trouble at one time or another from this cause, and on one occasion Mr. Cox hit on the expedient of filling part of a destroyer with concrete and lashing her to the wreck to prevent her turning from bottom upwards towards right way up.

In order to prevent *Glatton* righting herself two pairs of nine-inch wires were placed round the barbettes of the nine-inch guns and were passed under her starboard gunwale in readiness to be placed over the lifting lighters.

When at last all was ready and the weather became suitable four lifting-lighters, which had been hired from the Admiralty were put in position and were "pinned down" to the wreck with wire hawsers at low tide. Air was pumped into the wreck, the lifting lighters were dewatered, and then as the tide began to rise we waited to see what would happen. It was an anxious moment, and perhaps for the first time since I had had anything to do with this "major operation" I began to wonder if after all I hadn't bitten off more than I could chew.

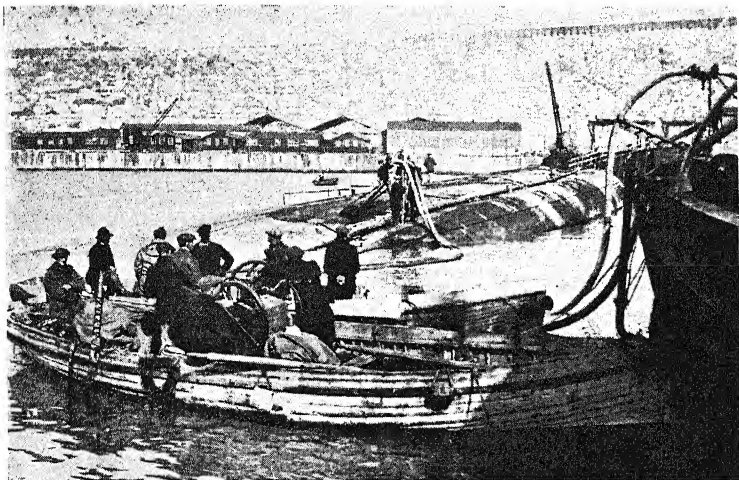
But the feeling soon passed, and soon a cheer broke out from the army of men employed aboard the various craft, which included the Dover Harbour Board's salvage vessel *Dapper* and the tugs *Lady Brassey* and *Lady Duncannon*. Every eye had been waiting for the slightest sign of direct lift, and the



[Photo: Amos & Amos

# THE SALVAGE SHIP "DAPPER" AT WORK IN DOVER HARBOUR

Note the bull-nose over which she can lift 250 tons.



[Photo: Amos & Amos

## PUMPING AIR INTO "GLATTON"

Air compressors in the salvage ship, of which the bows can be seen on the right, are pumping air into the upturned monitor, *Glatton*, and keeping her afloat.

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cheer meant that *Glatton* was moving. Up, up, she came, and soon there was more of her bottom showing than ever before, and I found that the air in her was relieving the lighters of fifty per cent. of the weight.

I then gave orders for the tugs attached to the wreck and lighters to go ahead, but we did little beyond change the lie of the wreck, and satisfied with what had been done I suspended operations until the next day.

On the following morning swarms of people came to watch us and stared down at the little flotilla of salvage craft from every available point. For some time we gave them little to look at, I am afraid, but about 10.30 the tide gave us a real helping hand, and after a diver had cleared a fouled cable with a small explosive charge, which sent up a good column of water and scared the sightseers a bit, the flotilla began to move towards the shore. Very carefully we towed our burden until the tide began to ebb, when we quit work until the next tide. We worked all night until the early morning, but then decided to suspend operations until the Spring tides.

Eventually we moved *Glatton* 1,400 feet in two tides and put her alongside the western pier of the Submarine Harbour on March 16th, 1926, where she was eventually taken in hand by the ship breakers.

I have to admit that the foregoing description is a bit on the technical side, but those of my readers who have had anything to do with salvage work will

appreciate the story behind the technicalities, whilst others will, perhaps, be able to gather a little of the mass of problems we had to deal with and the patience required to tackle scores of details. In this job of raising the second largest ship ever salvaged by means of compressed air I was most ably assisted by Mr. Pollard, the salvage expert, Mr. P. G. Sutton, and Divers Maddison, Bolson, and Matthews.

Another difficult job I had connected with the harbour was the removal of the blockship *Livonian* from the western entrance to Dover Harbour. Soon after the outbreak of the Great War the Admiralty ordered the sinking of two blockships at this point, and they decided on the *Livonian* and the *Montrose*, the latter of which ships may be remembered as being that in which the notorious Dr. Crippen made his historic and abortive attempt to escape to Canada after the murder of his wife. The *Montrose* was brought alongside the Admiralty Pier Extension in December, 1914, and was all ready for sinking when overnight she broke away from her moorings in a gale of wind. She first of all drifted about the harbour, a serious danger to many warships, and then went out through the eastern entrance, eventually going aground on the Goodwins, where her remains can still be seen.

The *Montrose's* place was then taken by the *Black Prince* and the two ships were sunk according to plan. After the War the Southern Railway Company made representations to the Dover Harbour

Board about the blockships since they found them dangerous to their cross-Channel packets, and accordingly the Board asked for tenders for their removal. These tenders were found to be rather too high, and so it was decided that the Board's own staff should attempt the work.

We made a start on *Livonian*. When sunk she had been filled with Thames ballast and during her nineteen years below water the lower part of the ballast had solidified into a concrete-like mass so tough that we had to cut it with explosives.

I knew that we should not be able to get the ship up "in one," so decided to cut her in pieces and take her away section by section. First of all we cut her cross-girders so that she fell apart like the two halves of a lobster and that enabled us to get out the looser ballast with suction pumps. We got down three decks without much trouble, but the solidified ballast consisted of a block weighing about 5,000 tons. This was sixty feet below the surface and the position was so cramped that in any case we could not have manœuvred the necessary lifting lighters. I, therefore, set divers to work to cut the mass into more easily handled pieces.

To do this it was necessary for the divers to cut tunnels under the bottom of the wreck, each one 45 ft. long, 6 ft. deep, and 5 ft. wide through hard chalk and flint. The divers first of all made sumps 20 ft. deep on each side of the hull, and starting from both sides dug their way towards one another with

hoses, the debris being thrown back into the sumps and then brought to the surface. The difficulty of working in such conditions can be imagined. The divers were not only at the bottom of the sea but they were working in complete darkness in tunnels under a concrete laden hull; but so accurate was their work that they inevitably met neatly in the middle, touching hands right under the wreck's keel.

When the tunnels, or channels, were made we used explosives to cut through the concrete above them and so divided the *Livonian* into four sections.

The first section was raised on August 29th, 1932, with the assistance of lifting lighters, and when the state of the tide was suitable I put the salvage vessel *Dapper* on one side, the tug *Lady Duncannon* on the other, whilst the tug *Lady Brassey* went ahead towing.

At first all went well. The flotilla crossed the mouth of the western entrance, but the strong inflow of tide very nearly caused a major disaster, and for a little while I thought I had done the harbour a serious injury.

The craft drifted rather too far in and the section of the blockship, drawing about fifty feet, fouled the bottom and came to rest. It was in the Harbour fairway, and a fine thing it would have been for me if things had been only a little bit worse.

In salvage work a hundred and one unexpected things can happen, and it was quite on the cards that something would happen to prevent me



moving my portion of wreck from its new position, for I had to leave it there for a time, whilst the cross-Channel packets had to go dead slow past it. What the masters of the packets said about me I can easily imagine, and I was certainly not feeling any too good.

However, this incident gave the shore experts an opportunity of airing their knowledge, and such remarks as, "I knew he couldn't lift her,"—"He has blocked up the damn harbour and is humbugging everybody,"—"A pretty state of affairs,"—and so on.

But fate was kind, and on the following evening we got under way again without trouble. The bed of the harbour shoals quickly as the shore is approached, and when a short distance outside the West jetty of the Camber the section of blockship once more grounded. She was not in the way here, however, and we suspended operations for the night.

On the following morning the lighters lifted the section once more and towed it further inshore to a position where it was quite safe and not in anybody's way.

For the benefit of those who may be interested in this type of salvage my ideas on the subject may be of a little value.

The old idea of raising heavy weights such as sunken vessels, by means of lifting lighters was to stretch the lifting wires out on shore and to

although during the first lift of the *Livonian* one wire parted and was followed by the others. When wires part they make a tremendous noise and sparks fly all over the place.

I was standing in the centre of one of the lifting lighters between the wires at the time, and though I was very disappointed, the wires costing about £200 apiece, I could not help being amused at the way the men were dancing about, not knowing which way to turn to escape the ends of the wires. One of them ran up to me and said, "The wires are breaking, sir," as if I could not see what was happening for myself. Another exclaimed, "We have lost the lift for this tide." "So we have," I said, "and for more than one."

I told my assistant to slack all the wires away very carefully so as not to pull them from under the wreck, my plan being to use them to draw new wires underneath the *Livonian*.

As I have already described we eventually got the section away. The remaining portions were lifted in the same way; but I took them outside the harbour and dropped them out of the way of all shipping on the rocks between the South Foreland and Dover Harbour.

I cannot leave the subject of Dover Harbour without mentioning the return of H.M.S. *Vindictive* from Zeebrugge in April, 1918. I was sent out to pilot her back to Dover and berth her at the Admiralty Pier, where the dead and wounded were to be landed.

I did not altogether like the idea as I felt certain her gallant Captain, who had bravely taken her through the raid, gone alongside the Mole, and brought her back, would much prefer to finish the job himself and might resent any interference. However, orders were orders, and I had to obey, but I made up my mind not to interfere in any way unless I was asked to do by the Captain himself.

I boarded *Vindictive* about two or three miles from Dover between seven and eight in the morning, and I am sure I shall never forget the sight that met my eyes when I reached her deck. There were corpses and blood everywhere, some of the corpses being simply trunks without arms or legs, and the crew were arranging them on deck ready to be taken on shore.

I thought that was no place for me and so I made for the bridge. This was nearly as bad; there seemed to be blood everywhere, testifying to the veritable hell the ship had passed through. With the exception of introducing myself to the Captain and telling him I had been sent to assist if required, I took no part in the operations beyond berthing the ship at the Pier about 10 o'clock.

About 4 o'clock in the afternoon a relief crew of ratings were put on board and the raiding party landed. I was then asked to take *Vindictive* off and moor her to a buoy. This I did, getting ashore about 7.30 p.m.

About half an hour later there came a message over the telephone from the Duty Officer. "The Admiral wishes you to berth *Vindictive* at the Admiralty Pier by five o'clock to-morrow morning."

"I can't do it," I replied.

"But it is the Admiral's orders."

"I can't help it if it's the King's."

"But why won't you?"

"Because," I said, "at five o'clock there will be about seven feet less water than the *Vindictive* is drawing."

"Well, what time will you put her alongside?"

"At about eight o'clock."

I went on board about seven and saw about twenty ratings standing about. I asked for the Lieutenant, but was told there were no officers on board.

"Any engineers?" I asked.

"No, and there's no steam."

All this before breakfast did not add to the sweetness of my temper; but after turning things over in my mind I determined to try and do the job with our two large tugs. So I signalled to the tug on Examination duty to hand over its Examination people to a trawler and come to the *Vindictive*.

Whilst these preparations were being made the Admiral's launch came off with a message from the Duty Officer:

"Duty Officer's compliments and he would like to know when you intend to take *Vindictive* to the Pier."



At that moment I was not feeling very friendly disposed towards Duty Officers, as it was through them that I had been landed in a hole by not having been advised that there would be no steam in the *Vindictive*. So I replied, "When I'm ready." I had no more messages from shore.

At last we started, and on getting to the Pier I found all the berths except one were occupied by transports. The vacant berth was between two transports, allowing just room for the *Vindictive*. Stopping abreast of the berth and making ropes fast to the transports, one astern and one ahead, I cast off the tugs and let them push us in, managing to get the ship into the berth without touching anything.

There was a crowd of military and naval officers watching operations, probably expecting to see some fun. I heard one calling, and on looking over the bridge saw one of the old-time naval captains who was at the time acting as D.N.T.O. He was shouting at the top of his voice, "John Iron!"

I asked him what he wanted, and he roared out:

"There isn't another so-and-so in the world who could have done it."

The *Vindictive* was, of course, eventually sunk in Ostend Harbour. That night I had been out trying to save a torpedoed steamer, but she sank about two miles from Dover after we had been towing her for some six hours. I came into the Harbour and went home about eight o'clock.

I said to my wife, "If you will let me have a cup of coffee, I will have a bath and get a couple of hours' sleep."

The coffee was made but was never drunk, for a telephone message came through almost immediately from the Admiral's office with dramatic news.

"Admiral Keyes has been mined in Ostend Roads. Will you get away at once?"

At the same moment a car drew up at my door, and there I was off again. I went aboard the *Lady Brassey* and signalled to the *Lady Crundall* to follow us. The tide being suitable, I made a straight course for Ostend, and when about 20 miles from Dover we sighted the *Warwick* being towed by the destroyer *Whirlwind*.

On my getting on board the *Warwick* the destroyer was cast off and the tugs made fast. We got the *Warwick* safely back, putting her alongside the quay about 8.30 p.m.

## CHAPTER VII

### WRECK AND RAISING OF THE "VILLE DE LIEGE"

ABOUT 7 p.m. on Monday, February 11th, 1929, it was blowing a strong gale from the north-east, bringing a heavy sea into Dover harbour, and during this the steamer *Ville de Liege*, of about 2,000 tons, belonging to the Belgian State Railways, arrived from Ostend with forty-eight passengers and mails. As she was making for the inner berth of the Admiralty Pier she was struck by a heavy sea on the port quarter, being knocked round broadside on to the sea and driven on the rocks about two hundred feet from the Inner Harbour entrance. Fortunately her broadside position to the sea caused her to act as a kind of breakwater, and this enabled some of her port boats to be lowered and take the passengers into the harbour, where, though wet through, they landed in safety.

As usually happens in such circumstances, the vessel's electric installation failed and the steamer was in darkness. To remedy this I telephoned to the Officer in Charge of the Searchlights at the Admiralty Pier, asking him to turn the lights on the steamer. His reply was that he could not do so without orders. I am afraid that my language was not so polite as it

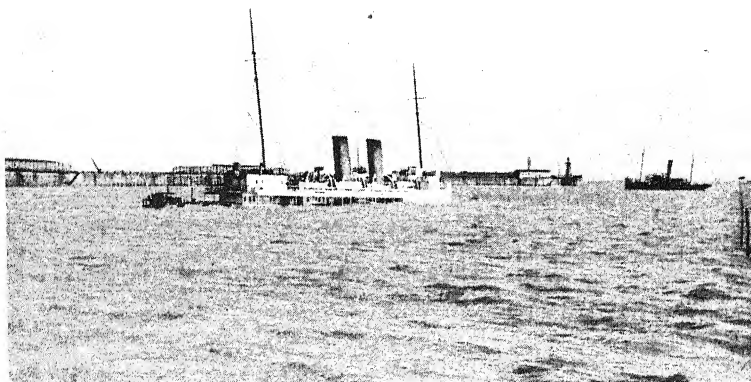
might have been as I told him to hurry up and get orders or I would make trouble. For the benefit of those who read this I have left out the actual words I used. In any case the printers would have substituted dashes, I think.

However, the searchlight authorities got their own back a bit, for a few days later I received an account made out on official blue paper in duplicate for the sum of fivepence, this being the cost of telephone calls asking permission for the searchlights to be turned on. This to a steamer on the rocks!

I ordered the tug to get as close to the vessel as possible and to fire a rocket over her to enable their towrope to be hauled on board and made fast, and when this was done to tell all hands to leave the vessel. I then proceeded to the Prince of Wales's Pier, and by the time I arrived there the tug was just beginning to tow.

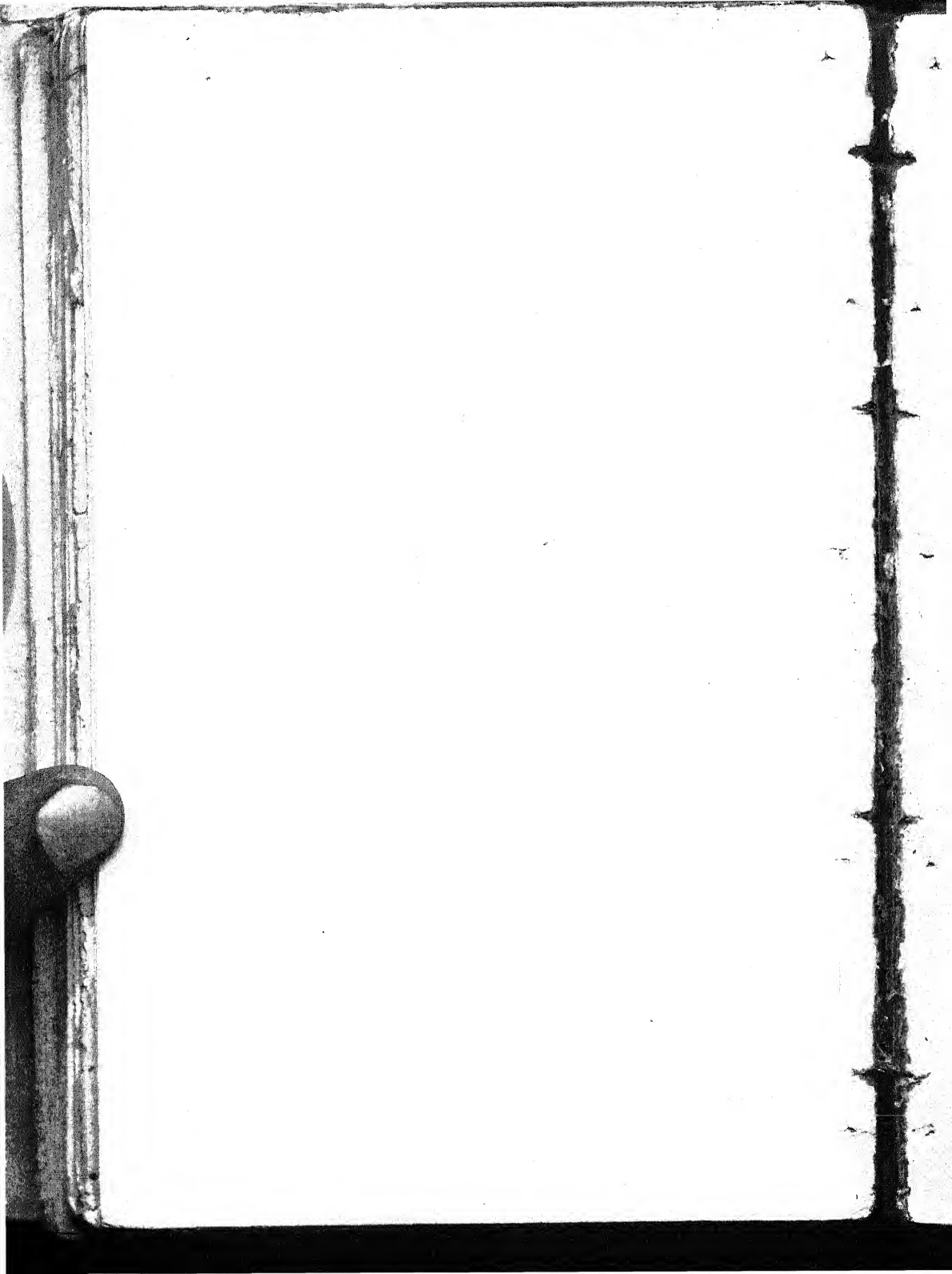
I think this was the coldest night I have ever experienced. The cold seemed to strike me across the forehead and at times seemed unbearable; but struggling on, I eventually got to the spot where the *Ville de Liege* lay. The tug was just towing her out into deeper water, but seeing that she was rapidly sinking, I stopped the tug and told her to let the steamer blow back and to hold her just clear of the rocks, then to let her sink on the sandy bottom just outside them. The main deck would be uncovered at low water. This would be better than letting her sink in deep water.





I FOUND ALL THE CABINS AND HOLDS OF THE "VILLE DE LIEGE"  
FULL OF WATER

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I then arranged for the crew to go to the Sailors' Hostel and the officers to an hotel and went home myself, glad enough to get where it was warm, for I felt absolutely frozen. I telephoned to Mr. Sutton, the Harbour Board Superintendent of Works, telling him what had happened and asking him to have divers, men, pumps, etc., in readiness to commence salvage operations as soon as possible the next morning.

The weather remained too bad and the sea too rough for us to get any plant on board or the tugs alongside, so at low water I took a motor-boat and managed to get aboard the vessel.

On making an inspection, I found all the cabins and holds, with the exception of the engine-room, full of water, but the water in the engine-room was level with the water outside, which proved that all the damage was in the engine-room.

We found that the mails were washing about on the main deck, so I sent the motor-boat on shore with orders to bring off half-a-dozen men and another boat and to inform the postal authorities that I was collecting the mail and landing it. I asked that they should send someone to the quay to take it over. By acting promptly and not waiting to go through the "red tape" business of first getting permission all the mails and parcel post, with the exception of one mail bag, which was found later, were recovered and handed over to the Post Office. As I heard no more about them I concluded that they were delivered intact.

The engine-room and boiler-room were overflowing and everything was thick with grease, making it very difficult to get about the decks. Where they were not covered with grease they had a coating of ice, the decks freezing as soon as the water was off them.

The divers were able to go down on the morning of February 14th, and after making as full an examination as possible, reported very serious damage to the bottom, especially amid-ships under the engine and boiler rooms. Owing to the *Ville de Liege* being hard on the bottom they could not examine below the bilge keelsons.

Some gentlemen from the Belgian Marine Administration came over from Ostend, and on reading the divers' report, came to the conclusion that the vessel was a total loss. With this I agreed so far as the value of the vessel was concerned, and I also agreed about the great expense of repairing her, but as she was badly wanted in the Ostend-Dover service I offered to raise her and do such temporary repairs as would allow her to be taken to Calais or Ostend at whatever sum it cost the Dover Harbour Board, taking no profit.

At first they demurred, thinking it best to apply to the Admiralty to raise her by means of wires passed round her to lifting-lighters; but I pointed out to them that if wires were passed round her in her present state they would cut her clean in two, with the result that they would have two parts

to lift instead of one. This was definitely not a case for lifting a vessel with wires.

After this delay I was asked to make the attempt to raise the vessel, and at once set the divers to work patching and plugging the holes where possible. We found the main injection pipe was broken off the ship's side, so one diver was set to plug all the holes in the grating with about two hundred small soft wood wedges.

The divers were greatly delayed at their work by the fact that the severe cold caused the air outlets on their helmets to freeze, but we filled in the time by getting all our pumps on board. Two 12 in., two 10 in., and two 8 in. pumps were put into the engine-room and boiler-room together with the hoses of the *Lady Duncannon's* 10 in. pump and an 8 in. pump in a barge alongside, a 7 in. pump being put down in the after-cabins and one in the fore-cabins.

A good deal of delay was caused by bad and excessively cold weather, and even though the divers were willing to work, the excessive cold prevented them going under water, whilst we had trouble with the pumps, which had to be constantly opened up and freed from ice, for if they were stopped for only a few minutes the water in them froze.

One of the directors of Cockerill's, the firm who built the *Ville de Liege*, came over to see her, and when on board said he could not understand how we could get men to work in such awful weather.



The secret was that Mr. Sutton and I kept working with them, all being cheerful together.

It was not until low water at about noon on February 20th that, on starting the pumps, which together discharged 4,000 tons of water an hour, it was found that sufficient leaks had been stopped for us to control the water in the steamer and to prevent it rising in the engine-room and boiler-room as the tide flowed. Of course the forward and after cabins were pumped out at the same time, and when the pumps were finished with this work they were turned into the engine-room and stokeholds, where trouble was to be expected.

On the tide's rising the water in the engine-room and stokehold was found to be still under control, and coming to the conclusion that there was a good chance of lifting her on that tide, I ordered the *Lady Brassey* to make fast on our port quarter and keep a steady strain on her ropes so that no time should be lost of getting her into the Tidal Harbour if she did happen to lift.

About 3 p.m. the water outside had risen to about a foot below the main deck, and as it continued to rise, my hopes began to sink as it seemed to show that the ship was not going to lift; but a little later I noticed we were moving astern, and then I knew that so long as the pumps held we had got her and must take our chance of having enough water to get her through the harbour entrance and out of the fairway.

However, she kept going a few feet at a time until we not only got her through but also out of the fairway and close to the quay where she would be dry at low water. To show how little reserve we had with our pumping plant I had to disconnect one 8 in. pump, which was in a barge alongside, as I wanted to put the *Ville de Liege* alongside the quay; but before the barge could be pulled clear the water overcame the other pumps and the ship went down again and took the ground.

This did not matter, and we let her stay where she was until she had been made sufficiently water-tight to be kept afloat with the pumps aboard and to pass through the entrance of the Granville Dock.

Here she was kept afloat so that the divers could work under her bottom and stop all openings and make her water-tight enough to be towed stern first to Calais to dry-dock. The reason for towing stern first was the necessity of using the fore rudder, the after one being unworkable.

On March 8th I was satisfied that it would be safe to take her to Calais, and so off she went, leaving at 7 a.m. and arriving there at 10.48 a.m. She went into dry-dock at once. I need not say that I returned home feeling much more comfortable than I had at any time since February 11th.

The Belgian Marine Administration were very pleased and in addition to sending letters of congratulation to Mr. Sutton and myself they made me a Knight of the Order of Leopold (K.O.L.),

and Mr. Sutton a Knight of the Order of the Crown (K.O.C.)

I learned that the lifting of this vessel caused a good deal of talk amongst certain gentlemen on the Admiralty Pier. Someone said, "He will never lift her, and if he does the so-and-so will sink and block up the mouth of the harbour. Then our own boats won't be able to get in or out."

Fortunately criticism of this kind has no effect on me: I simply go along on my own sweet way.

I must mention that the *Ville de Liege* was subsequently brought into service again on the Dover-Ostend route.

## CHAPTER VIII

### WHEN IN DOUBT RING UP THE HARBOUR MASTER

My family has been connected with Dover Harbour since 1832, when my grandfather, John Iron, was appointed by the Wardens of Dover Harbour. He continued in the appointment for twenty-eight years, until 1860, being succeeded by my father, Richard Iron, who held the berth until he died in 1882.

At that time I was considered too young for the berth, being only twenty-four years of age, although shortly after appointed to the command of a fine full-rigged ship, the *British Peer*, stories of which I have already told.

My father's deputy held the post for nine years and was then pensioned. He was followed by Captain Dixon, and when I was at St. Petersburg in command of a steamer I received an invitation to fill the position as his deputy, it being hinted that he would hold the position only for a short time and that then I should become Harbour Master.

At first I was inclined to kick against the idea, but was persuaded to accept the offer by my wife, who very wisely pointed out that although I was in command of a fine steamer the time would come

when I would like a shore berth and perhaps not then be able to find one. So I accepted the offer, and in 1891, after being away for nine years, I became officially connected with Dover Harbour. In 1898 I was appointed Harbour Master, and hold that position to this day.

The duties of a Harbour Master vary according to the requirements of different ports.

As a rule the duties consist of having charge of a harbour, to arrange the docking and undocking of vessels, appointing berths and quays at which cargoes can be discharged, and to have charge of all men connected with the harbour, to allow no vessel to enter dock before her actual draught has been supplied, and to be certain that there is sufficient water on the dock sill to allow a vessel to pass over and into the dock in safety. Should a mistake be made in this respect, the Harbour Commissioners might be faced with serious if not ruinous claims brought against them owing to the wrong doing of their servants.

I think the duties of the Harbour Master at Dover are somewhat different from those of any other port I know.

He must be conversant with the various tides and currents running across the Outer Harbour, which is of some 610 acres in extent, and so be able to suggest to liners using the Harbour as a port of call the best time to enter and anchor. He also arranges for pilots to be supplied with a plan showing



the deep-water berths to allow vessels to anchor and remain afloat over low water, as many vessels draw twenty-eight feet.

At Dover I have charge of all the salvage plant, consisting of the two powerful tugs *Lady Brassey* and *Lady Duncannon* of 1,600 h.p. and 800 h.p. respectively, besides the powerful salvage craft *Dapper* of 850 h.p., and many large steam and motor pumps.

Perhaps I may mention here that I have designed and prepared plans and specifications for the Dover tugs, the first being the *Lady Curzon*, built in 1904 by Messrs. J. P. Rennoldson & Sons, of South Shields. She was the first twin-screw tug built for the Harbour Board, the former tugs being paddle-wheel vessels.

She was followed in 1906 by the *Lady Crundall*. These two vessels have since been sold, and according to Lloyd's Register the *Lady Curzon* is still in commission, but the *Lady Crundall* met an untimely end in foreign waters.

They have been replaced by the present Dover tugs, *Lady Brassey* and *Lady Duncannon* built by the same firm. Both are salvage and towage instruments of the highest class and are fully equipped with rocket apparatus for establishing communication with vessels in distress and for saving life, also with a very full electric light installation and salvage pumps, etc., to enable them to render assistance of every kind.

The *Dapper* was formerly a Canadian tug, and is fitted with air compressors, salvage pumps, steam

capstans, and is capable of lifting 300 tons. We also have a floating crane which is capable of lifting 25 tons on a 75 ft. radius.

As well as being responsible for this valuable plant the Harbour Master takes charge of all salvage work rendered necessary by collision or other causes in the Strait of Dover.

When the salvage is completed I then have to make up my mind, if I am unable to arrive at an amicable settlement, whether it is best to arrest the salved property at once (this is usually the case) or not, and also to arrive at the amount of bail to be demanded.

Now this is a matter which requires a little judgment, as it is impossible at the time to know the value of the salved property. If too little bail is asked and the Court awards a larger sum than that demanded for bail, the owners only pay the amount of bail. If the award is appreciably smaller than the bail, the judge will state on what portion of excess bail interest is to be charged. When I arrive at the amount of bail to be asked I take statements from those present at the salvage operations and after making certain I have all the facts I hand them to the Board's solicitors, who pass them on to the K.C. retained for the case. On these the Statement of Claim is drawn up. I think there is no other Harbour Master on the coast who takes on this business as part of his duties.

There is another side to my duties. Some people

seem to think that the proper time to telephone to the Harbour Master is between midnight and 3 a.m. I am in the fortunate, or perhaps unfortunate, position of having a telephone at my bedside, and here follows the sort of thing that happens.

About 2.30 a.m. a call from London. One imagines a spark, young or old, tacking his way home from some club or other, with his hat, if he hasn't lost it, on one side, and at peace with all the world. He suddenly runs up against a telephone box. This gives him a brainy notion.

He wants to go to Paris, and thinks it a good time to inform the Harbour Master at Dover of his intention. It often takes some time to discover what he really wants to say.

"Are you the Harbour Master?"

"Yes."

"I am thinking of going to Paris in about three days' time. I shan't be alone, so I shall want a reserved cabin."

"What boat will you be going by?"

"The Calais boat, of course."

"Well, there are two boats to Calais—1 p.m. and 4 p.m."

"Oh damn it, I will go by the early boat, and please see that a cabin is reserved."

"I have nothing to do with cabins."

"What the devil am I to do then?"

"Telephone Dover 800, the Marine Office. They simply love being got up in the middle of the night."

About midnight one Monday night I was called up on the telephone.

"Are you the Harbour Master?"

"Yes."

"I am speaking from a London hotel and I want to know what the crossing will be like on Wednesday next. Can you tell me?"

"No, madam."

"But you *are* the Harbour Master?"

"Yes, but not a prophet."

"Where can I find out?"

"I would suggest that you ask the Meteorological Office."

"How far is that?"

"I don't know. Where are you staying?"

"I have already told you, at an hotel."

"Then you had better ask the hotel manager."

A bang and the telephone is cut off.

Now, in my wrath, I could picture an elderly lady sitting at her dressing-table, partly undressed, with all her toilet accessories spread out before her. The removable part of her hair, which is the greater part, wrapped in pink paper and in a box at her side, the remainder or fixed part, which does not amount to much, is being vigorously brushed in the vain endeavour to make it meet all round.

While this is in progress her eyes suddenly fall on the telephone in her room, and this gives her the bright idea of arousing the Harbour Master to ask what the Channel crossing will be like in two days'

time. Then I am expected always to be perfectly sweet-tempered.

On one occasion I had not been to bed for two nights owing to the bad weather in the Channel, but on the third the weather began to moderate, so I told the Pier Foreman that if anything occurred or the weather again became bad he was to telephone me; but if everything was all right, he was not to disturb me as I was going to turn in.

About 2 a.m. the telephone started to ring furiously, and thinking something serious was the matter, I jumped out of bed and downstairs to the telephone—it was at that time in the hall of my house—and this is what I heard, "Everything is all right, sir. I thought you would like to know."

Fortunately for the man's ears, he rang off before I could get my answer in. He has since died, and I hope he has gone where there are no telephones.

On another occasion the Pier Foreman rang me up about midnight and said:

"A gentleman is in the office. He is staying at the Lord Warden Hotel and he wants you to let him know at seven o'clock if the sea will be quite smooth for crossing at one o'clock. It must be quite smooth as his wife has a 'hermitage' in her inside, and must not run the risk of being seasick."

"You mean there is risk of 'hæmorrhage,' don't you?"

"No, sir, the gentleman says his wife has a 'hermitage' in her inside."



"Well, I am very sorry for her, but tell the gentleman that if he looks out of his bedroom window in the morning, he will see for himself what the sea is like."

Prior to the Marine Station being built, one of my various duties was to be in charge of all traffic passing over the Admiralty Pier and be responsible for all movements of trains from the time they left the railway stations until they returned. In fact I was something like a thirty-fifth rate station master, and at times came across some crusty old people. In those days, the platform was of the old style, about eighteen inches below the level of the floors of the carriages.

One day in proceeding along the pier, I noticed a rather stout old gentleman holding on to the handle of a carriage door, and trying to find the platform with his foot, so seeing an opportunity to get in my day's good deed, I went to his assistance, taking hold of his arm, and helping him down on to the platform. When he found himself safely on the platform, and myself feeling very virtuous for assisting him, the only thanks I received was, "What in the hell business had you to touch me? I did not ask for your help." I came to the conclusion that I had better walk on before being accused of trying to steal his pocket book.

On another occasion, while walking up the pier, I came across another stout elderly gentleman trying

to run down to the boat and looking as if he would at any minute have a heart attack. In passing him, I said, "There is plenty of time, sir; the boat will not leave for another twenty minutes." He stopped at once, glared at me, and then said, "Mind your own damn business! I didn't ask you what time the boat leaves."

That was another day's good deed spoilt.

In the month of September, 1901, I went to London with my wife, intending to stay for a day or two for a change, but I had not been in the Grand Hotel for more than an hour before receiving a telegram saying I was required to leave Dover by the 11 o'clock boat to Ostend to accompany the Chairman and other officials of the Dover Harbour Board to Berlin to meet the German Emperor. An invitation had been received for the party to be present at a grand military review, and on the following day to meet the Emperor at Potsdam Palace with Herr Ballin of the Hamburg-American Line, to see if arrangements could be made for the Hamburg-American liners to make Dover a port of call.

I left London by the 4.30 a.m. train, leaving my wife behind, and arrived at Dover about 8 a.m. At the boat I met the Chairman of the Dover Harbour Board, the Registrar, his secretary and the engineer. The passage was moderately fine, but the Chairman and Registrar soon began to look a little the worse for wear. To cheer them up I commenced to recite, "When once aboard the lugger with the girl in

my persuasion, all will be well," but I am afraid my efforts in that direction were not all appreciated. Weakly they waved me away, and I did not see them again until we arrived at Ostend.

We arrived in Berlin the following afternoon and were surprised to find that two German officers, who spoke English, had been attached to our party. They informed us they had received orders to be at our hotel at 7.30 the following morning to accompany us to the review. They duly turned up at the appointed time with three royal carriages, and we went in great state, everyone saluting us as we passed, the party trying to act up to the part. I had and still have an idea that it was the carriage and horses the saluting was intended for and not ourselves.

When we arrived on the ground, we were introduced to the Emperor, who was on horse-back, and he invited us to stand at his side at the saluting post, reminding us that we were the only civilians on the ground, as owing to the death of a relative the public was not admitted. They did not miss much, for it was raining hard all day and we were soon wet through and very cold. Although the review was a very fine sight, it was not of as much interest as it would have been if we had been soldiers and acquainted with military matters. The officers tried to explain the manœuvres, but I am afraid we were very dull people, whilst I am sure they would much preferred to have been joining in the fun.

It lasted all day and we arrived back at the hotel

about six o'clock, feeling very cold and hungry, as we had had no refreshment of any kind since breakfast, and I could not help noticing that most of the "swank" that we started with in the morning was missing on the homeward journey.

Before leaving the ground, the Emperor invited us to lunch with the Empress and himself at Potsdam Palace the following day.

On arrival at the Hotel Bristol and changing into dry clothes, our Chairman gave a dinner party, which included the two officers who accompanied us to the review, their wives, and Baron Richoffen and Herr Ballin. We had a merry evening, and by the time it was over were loving each other like brothers.

The next morning more royal carriages arrived to convey us to the Palace, where the Emperor met us and personally conducted us over the building. I must say he made us quite at home, throwing off all royal dignity and treating us as personal friends. At lunch we were quite a family party, the Empress entering into the conversation and jokes.

After lunch we were taken by the Emperor into the billiard room, and there talked over the business of the Hamburg-American liners calling at Dover, which was concluded satisfactorily and a date arranged for the first call.

On returning to the hotel, another swagger dinner party was arranged, and on the next morning the return journey home was commenced, all feeling very proud of themselves.

There were a few comic incidents during the journey.

In the first place, just as we were leaving Dover, the Registrar's Secretary handed me a bag containing forty pounds, with strict instructions not to give it to the Registrar, and to keep a strict account of every penny expended. This was a good enough joke for me to pass on to the Registrar, and I reminded him jokingly that he was not to be trusted with the cash.

"Don't you keep any account, we will make that up as we come back, and see how much we have left," he said. On our return we had just ten shillings in hand, and he made up the account and somehow made it balance to the ten shillings surplus. I wanted to change this to get a whisky and soda, but he said, "No, you can't do that, or the balance would be upset."

The next incident was when we arrived at the frontier for Custom baggage examination. All the passengers with their baggage were locked in a large room, which was surrounded by a bench on which the luggage was to be placed.

Our Registrar said, "There is no need to open our cases, as I am well known here."

When the Custom Officer got to us the Registrar touched his hat and with a heavenly smile said "Good day, sir." The reply was given with a frown and "Open them." I did no good by bursting out laughing at the downfall of our Registrar. The



Custom Officers kept us until the last, and then turned everything out of our bags and left us to repack them, nearly causing us to miss the train. I said, "It appears you *are* well known here," and he replied, "If you say anything about it, I will try and get you the sack."

The Registrar was just about my own age, but had a white beard and moustache. At the hotel, I went out to post a letter, and on my return, the waiter informed me, "Your father has gone to bed sir." I said nothing about this until we were finishing lunch the next day. When the waiter brought me the bill I told him without a smile to give the change to my father. The Registrar asked me what I meant by this remark, and on my telling him what happened on the previous night I was again threatened with the sack if I mentioned it in Dover.

In writing the foregoing has brought to my mind a salvage case I once fought in Hamburg, and I was very much impressed by what I considered the fairness of the Court.

We had rendered salvage services to a German liner on shore at Dungeness, and after floating, she cast off our tug and proceeded to Hamburg, so there was nothing to do but to arrest ship, cargo and freight in the Hamburg Court. I demanded bail in the sum of three thousand pounds, later offering to take two thousand pounds in a settlement, the owners of the vessel making a counter offer of six hundred pounds. This our London solicitors advised

me to accept, being very annoyed because I would not agree.

They accordingly communicated with our Registrar, saying they had written to their Hamburg agents, "whose opinion no doubt would be worth as much as Captain Iron's."

Their Hamburg agents duly replied, saying "By all means hold out for two thousand pounds, and if the owners will not agree, take the case into Court." Thus I won the first round.

In due course the Registrar and myself went to Hamburg, and on going into Court, found it quite different from our Admiralty Court, in fact it was more like an Arbitration case with the Receiver of Wrecks as President. We sat at a long table, the plaintiffs on one side and the defendants on the other.

Before the case started, we were very surprised to see the President stand up and say, "Gentlemen, as we can all speak English, and no doubt our friends will not too well understand German, I propose to try this case throughout in English." The case was tried without one German word being used, and when over, we were awarded the sum of fourteen hundred pounds.

There is generally a funny side to all troubles, if one can only be so constituted to see them.

Once I had a small salvage case. One of the tugs had rescued a small ketch with a cargo of coal for Dover, and to save the owners the expense of arresting

the craft, cargo and freight, I looked into the office of the cargo owners and told them if they promised not to discharge the cargo I would not arrest, and in the meantime would try and arrange a settlement.

Two days later, when on my way to the office, a member of the coal merchants' firm stopped me to advise me that they had received a communication from London and a gentleman was on his way down to Dover. I was going to get into serious trouble for stopping the discharging of the cargo. He was rather surprised that instead of turning white and trembling at the knees I laughed and said, "I am very pleased, as a little trouble did one good."

The gentleman duly arrived in my office quite prepared to frighten me with his august presence. Without any introduction he started proceedings:

"What business have you to arrest this cargo?"

"I have not arrested it, but if you commence to discharge I will."

"You have no right to stop the discharge of the cargo, as there is ample value in the craft alone to cover any salvage award you will get."

"That just shows me you know absolutely nothing about the laws of general average. This being a general average case, the ship, cargo and freight have each to contribute in their respective proportions to the salvage. Do you think I am so young at the job as to part with the cargo and hold the craft for her proportion of the award? If you give me your

undertaking to find bail, if found necessary, in the sum of £250 for ship, cargo and freight, I will at once release the cargo."

"I would not give an undertaking for my own brother."

"Well, if you have such a poor opinion of your own family, how do you expect me to have any faith in you?"

He then said he would return at once to London and enter an action against me. I told him he had better be quick about it, or he would not be able to have me hanged until the next day. I heard nothing for two days, and then received a cheque for £250.

On another occasion I went out in one of the tugs and brought in a derelict steamer, running her on shore to prevent her sinking. On the case coming into the Admiralty Court an expert witness was produced, and he had made some very elaborate plans of the steamer to prove that it was impossible for her to sink and that by putting her aground I had caused more damage than was done by the collision she had suffered.

The captain of the steamer was also put in the witness-box to back up the expert's opinion; but for some reason they had lost sight of the fact that I had taken out a summons of discovery of documents, and among the papers so found was a letter from the captain to his owners, which read, "The steamer was not put on shore a minute too soon, for she practically



sank as she took the ground." Collapse of expert witness and captain, the Judge saying that they were not very reliable witnesses.

During the days of small sailing-packets or sloops in the Dover-Calais service (1720-1820) the ships not only had the tempests to deal with but pirates as well. In favourable weather and with tides to suit them they took about eight hours for the passage, and it can be imagined that not many people went to the Continent for pleasure.

The first steam packet put in the service was the *Rob Roy*, in 1820, a small vessel of 90 tons and with engines of no more than 30 h.p. This innovation was due to private enterprise, and the Post Office would have nothing to do with her, considering the sailing sloops to be safer than craft propelled by steam.

In 1822 two more steamers were put into the service, the *Sovereign* and the *Monarch*, each being fitted with engines of 32 h.p. Still the Post Office stuck to the sailing craft for the carrying of mails. But in 1823 the *Spitfire*, 83 ft. long and 30 ft. beam, with engines of 40 h.p., also put on through private enterprise, was adopted by the Post Office and continued to do so for five years in conjunction with three other steamers put on by the Post Office authorities themselves. They had found out at last that steamers were as safe as sailing vessels for the carriage of mails. These steamers were H.M.S. *Fury*, *King George*, and *Eclipse*, being run in addition



to those owned by private firms, the *Monarch*, *Sovereign*, *Britannia*, and *Medusa*.

The sailing vessels were largely used to carry important personages, specie, and despatches, usually taking between three and four hours to do the passage.

About this time the South-Eastern Railway and the London, Chatham, and Dover Railway were making a bid for the cross-Channel services, the former between Folkestone and Boulogne, the latter between Dover and Calais. But they nearly ruined one another by continually fighting like Kilkenny cats until very little but their tails were left. They then thought it wise to bury the hatchet and settle down to business.

Somewhere about 1860, the London, Chatham and Dover Railway Company were running a regular service in connection with their trains. Their fleet consisted of nine small paddle-wheel steamers, viz.,

	Built	Length	Speed
<i>Foam</i> . . .	1862	230 feet	14 knots
<i>Petrel</i> . . .	1862	230 "	14 "
<i>Maid of Kent</i> . . .	1862	196 "	13½ "
<i>Samphire</i> . . .	1862	196 "	13½ "
<i>Breeze</i> . . .	1863	208 "	13½ "
<i>Wave</i> . . .	1863	208 "	13½ "
<i>Prince</i> . . .	1864	210 "	13 "
<i>France</i> . . .	1864	206 "	13 "
<i>Poste</i> . . .	1865	100 "	10 "

The continual bickering between the two companies, each trying to get the better of the other,

caused a very poor return to each, keeping down the number of passengers carried between Dover and Calais, which in the '70's amounted to only about 197,000 per year. But when the London, Chatham and Dover Railway Company made up their mind to work Dover and leave other ports alone, their passenger traffic at once increased, and by 1888 the annual total was 235,695. By the end of 1889, the figures increased nearly 1,000 per week.

When steam was taking the place of sail, there were a few independent adventurers, each trying to make improvements for the cross-Channel services. I am sorry to say I am old enough to remember most of them, but owing to my father being Harbour Master, I made a passage or two in these "Peculiars" as they were nicknamed.

The first of these "Peculiars" was the Twin Ship *Castalia* a steamer of 490ft. long and 60ft. beam. She was constructed with a double hull, secured with iron or steel girders, leaving a space of 26ft. between the hulls, the space being bridged over to give access to both hulls. The paddle wheel worked between the two hulls leaving the starboard side of one hull and the port side of the other smooth, like the present propeller driven ships. The *Castalia* was designed in this manner for the purpose of preventing sea sickness. She made her trial trip to Calais on July 25th, 1875, the passage occupying one hour and fifty minutes. Her subsequent passages proved her to be a slow boat and also very heavy on

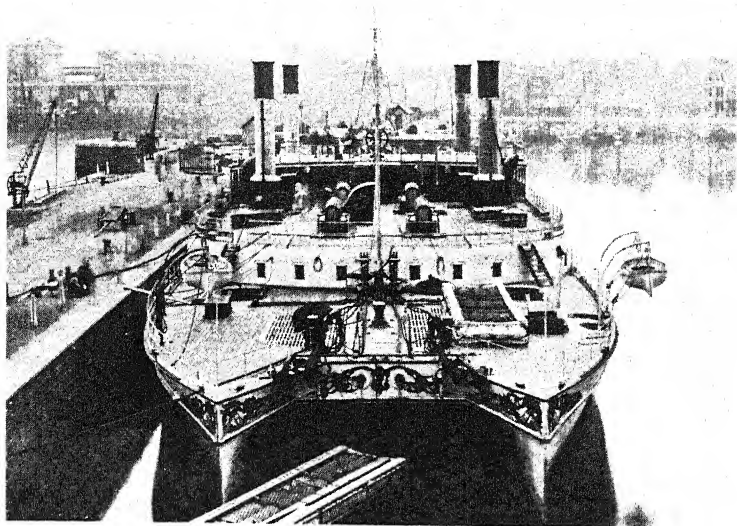
coal and other stores, so after running for about three months, she was taken off the service in October, 1875. As to preventing sea sickness, she was also a failure; but from time to time, after alterations and improvements, she was again put on the service. She proved no more successful and sometime in 1878 the Owners went into liquidation and the *Castalia*, as far as cross-Channel service work, ceased to exist.

The next "Peculiar" was the twin Steamer *Calais-Douvres*, built in 1878, 302ft. long with a speed of 13 knots, but although a favourite with passengers she proved very costly to run, also a very wet boat in rough weather. The general nautical opinion was that she would be dangerous in a gale of wind. Consequently she did not run during the winter months which was just the time when she would be useful to prevent sea sickness, if that were possible. None of these anti-seasickness boat designers seemed to realise that a ship or steamer must use the waves or the waves go over her.

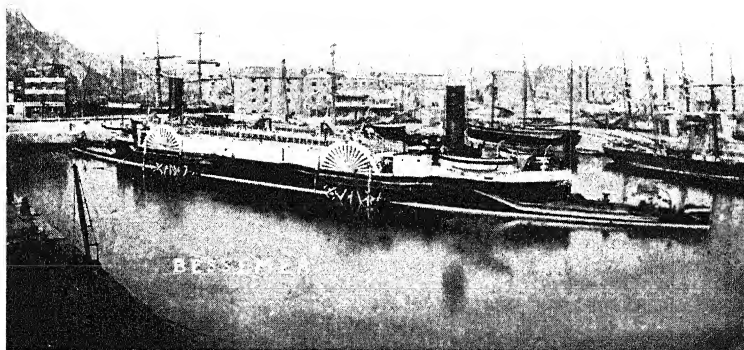
The *Calais-Douvres* was taken off the service in 1887, and this ended the twin ships.

Another "Peculiar" was the *Bessemer*, which came to Dover in 1875. She was another anti-seasickness boat, but was single built, having a swinging saloon fixed on gimbals like those of a ship's compass, the idea being that the saloon should remain horizontal no matter how much the ship might roll in a heavy sea.





THE LAST OF THE "PECILIARS," THE DOUBLE-HULLED  
CROSS-CHANNEL STEAMER, "CASTALIA"



THE CROSS-CHANNEL STEAMER "BESSEMER," ONE OF THE  
EXPERIMENTAL "PECILIARS"

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She was fitted with four paddle-wheels, one pair aft and one pair forward. She steered very badly, and on her first trip to Calais refused to answer her helm, with the result that on going into the harbour she crashed through the West Pier, for which damage the Municipality of Calais entered a claim for £2,800. As those in charge of the ship refused to allow the swinging saloon to swing, it was never tried out. So ended the *Bessemer*.

The Railways Company seemed to be getting tired of the "Peculiars" and commenced building ships on more orthodox lines, commencing with the *Invicta* and following with the *Victoria* and *Empress*, whose fittings were more luxurious than any of the preceding vessels.

When the London Chatham and Dover Railway and the South Eastern Railway were running in opposition, the former between Dover and Calais and the latter between Folkestone and Boulogne, the boats in both services were paddle-steamers, and as it was before the time of steam steering-gear they were fitted with double wheels aft and steered by four men, and having a man to pass the orders from the bridge to the helmsman.

One foggy night the South Eastern's boat left Folkestone for Boulogne as usual, but had to steer slightly to port to clear a vessel, and somehow the Captain forgot to order her back on her proper course. Everything went on all right for about an hour and a half, and then the steamer took the

ground. The mate went forward, thinking she was ashore off Boulogne, but after listening for a little while, he called out, "Captain, I'm damned if they're not talking English."

The fact was that owing to not altering her course the ship had made a wide circle and had taken the ground to the Westward of Dungeness.

Of course, all those ships have now gone their way, making room for the turbine steamers. The first of the cross-Channel turbine steamers was the *Queen*, which began her service in 1903. The *Empress*, *Victoria*, and *Princess Elizabeth* followed. To-day the number of people who cross the Channel on the Dover-Calais and Dover-Ostend routes is well in excess of half a million.

The Railway Companies have continued to improve the services by building better and larger steamers, the last being the three train-ferries which are to run between Dover and Dunkerque as soon as the Train Ferry Dock at Dover is complete. That will probably be during the present year.

## CHAPTER IX

### AT THE GATEWAY OF ENGLAND

FOR many years as Harbour Master it was one of the pleasures and duties of the office, before the new Marine Station was opened just before the war, to make arrangements and receive persons of distinction landing or embarking at Dover. At this time there was no real Marine Station, the trains running on to the pier, which was simply an open quay, thirty feet wide, and with the exception of a raised parapet on the west side, quite unprotected and without shelter, the cross-Channel boats lying on the east or west side according to which was the lee side. With strong S.W. winds and high tides, the spray would break over the parapet giving the passengers a bath on their way from the train to the boat or boat to train. Of course at the present time, with the beautiful Marine Station, all inconvenience has ceased.

Their late Majesties, King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra were often crossing to and from the Continent, and the great consideration they showed for every one made it more a pleasure than a duty to do everything possible for them, no matter

whether they were travelling privately or as their Majesties.

On one occasion, King Edward was crossing in the Royal Yacht, and it was arranged for the yacht to berth at the Prince of Wales' Pier. There was a strong easterly wind at the time, consequently I arranged for berthing her at the west side of the pier, which was not so convenient for the Guard of Honour etc.

On the military arriving on the pier, I was informed the yacht was to come to the east side. I said, "She will come to the west side," but was informed that it was the King's orders for her to come to the east side, which I doubted.

As the Royal Yacht neared the harbour entrance I made the signal to come to the west side, and the military officers, who, of course, did not understand our signals, were surprised to see her making for that side and to hurry up and change their arrangements.

When the yacht had berthed I thought that it might have been the King's direct orders for the yacht to go to the east side, in which case it would be well for me to make the first explanation. I, therefore, met His Majesty at the gangway and said:

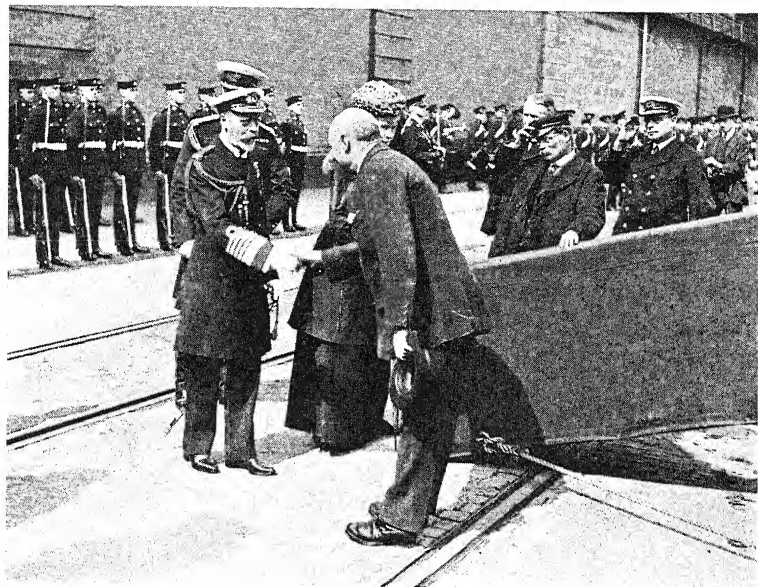
"I am very sorry not to have been able to obey Your Majesty's orders."

"What was that?" he asked.

"To berth your yacht on the east side," I replied.

"Why didn't you?"





ONE OF THE PLEASURES OF MY OFFICE

Has been making arrangements and receiving persons of distinction landing or embarking at Dover. His late Majesty King George V shaking hands with me before embarking for his last holiday abroad.



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"Because I did not want her to be damaged by the swell setting on that side."

"Ah," he said. "I knew you had a good reason."

I mention this to show how thoughtful and kind he was to everyone.

On the last crossing King Edward made from France to Dover I met him as usual, and when he shook hands with me I noticed how cold his hand was and was also struck with his remark that it was a bitterly cold day. I asked him if he had had a good crossing.

"Yes," said he, "but it was very cold."

In actual fact it was a warm day, and I could not help realising that he was a very sick man. He was, unhappily, very sick, and the coldness of his hand I had felt was the coldness of approaching death. Within a very few weeks he had passed away.

On another occasion Queen Alexandra was crossing and had her sister, the Dowager Empress of Russia, with her. When the latter was coming over no one was allowed for some reason on the parapet of the pier, and the rule was followed on this occasion.

The Queen noticed it and asked me the reason why the public were kept off the pier. It was rather an awkward question with her sister present, for, of course, it was the authority's rule lest there should be any "unfortunate incident." I stammered out, "We thought it best on this occasion——"

The Queen very quickly saw what I meant and replied immediately that she quite understood.

The Dowager Empress of Russia often came through Dover. Lord Howe used to travel with her. On one occasion the military were to meet her and after the boat was alongside, Lord Howe came up and said, "The Empress would like to receive you gentlemen in the cabin." Not considering I was included I remained on the pier, but shortly after he came up again and said, "The Empress was asking for you."

When I arrived at the cabin door, she was seated at the table and I was saluted with, "Well, I have been coming in so often that even you will not come and see me now, and the last time I came you landed me in a snow storm." She then asked me if I would see her to the train. It was a pleasure to be able to do any little thing one could for her, for she seemed to be always so kind and thoughtful.

During the time he was Prime Minister the Right Honourable Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman often stayed in Dover, and we used to meet on the pier and chat. He always liked a joke and one day I introduced him to the artist for *Punch*.

When he left to go on board the boat, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman said, "I am glad you introduced him to me. Perhaps he won't draw such damned ugly pictures of me now."

Another time a gentleman came up to us and spoke before embarking, and after he had gone, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman said, "I must tell you a



THE KAISER CALLED TO ME TO GO UP ON THE BRIDGE

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joke about him, although it is against ourselves. Some years ago in the time of the 'hustings' at election time he was standing for Dover as Liberal candidate against the Conservative candidate. To make friends with the people, he stayed in Dover about three months before the election and of course used to dine with some of the county families and listen to their conversation, as he himself was a poor speaker. The time came for him to make a speech from the 'hustings' in the Market Place, and this is what he said, 'Ladies and Gentlemen—What a wonderful place your town of Dover is—fancy, I can have my breakfast, go up to London and buy everything I want and be back in Dover in time for dinner.' One need not say he was bottom of the poll."

The last time I saw Mr. George Wyndham, M.P., and the Countess Grosvenor was one Sunday when my wife and I were coming from Church. We met them just outside and they walked back to my house with us. I walked with the Countess and the wife with Mr. Wyndham.

When they left my wife surprised me by saying, "I don't believe Mr. Wyndham is going to live much longer; he told me he can never sleep and is going to Paris to see if anything can be done." It was only a few days after that we heard he had died.

When the Hamburg-American Line was making preparations to make Dover a port of call for their

liners, business in connection with this often took me to Hamburg to talk things over with Herr Ballin, who was a great friend of the Kaiser. On two or three occasions he took me with him to lunch with the Kaiser at Potsdam Palace. The lunches were quite informal and the Kaiser was always very jovial and made one feel at home.

When he was on his way to the Mediterranean in the Hamburg-American Steamer *Hamburg*, he stopped off Dover for letters and dispatches, which had been sent to my care.

I took these off in one of the tugs, and on going on board, made for the bridge on which the Kaiser was standing, but I was stopped at the foot of the ladder and told I was not to go up. The Emperor put his head over the rail and called out for me to go up, at the same time saying, "Put your cap on, Iron, you have no more hair on your head than I have." On going to him he shook hands and said, "When you came alongside, you never touched this boat." I replied, "We do not make it a practice when going alongside a steamer to get into collision with her." At this he laughed and reminded me of the times I met him at Potsdam.

After a few minutes I made to leave, but he said, "Don't go yet. It will take my fellows an hour to decode the dispatches. Come into my cabin and have a chat." We sat talking for about an hour and he told me most of his staff were quite nervous as they had never crossed the Bay of Biscay before. He

seemed to think it was a good joke that they were afraid of being seasick.

During the war, when I was running about the Channel night and day, the Admiral's joke was, "You will never be torpedoed, for being a friend of the Kaiser, he has given orders you are not to be touched." I do not know how that could be for I was always about in different ships.

Having been in charge of the piers and harbours at Dover for forty years, I have had the honour and pleasure of meeting most of the royalties and presidents and native chiefs of the world, but no pleasure can equal that of meeting their present Majesties, or any of the Royal Family.

When Prince Olaf was a small child and used to pass through Dover with his mother, he used to watch for me, and as soon as he was out of the train, would run to me and take hold of my fingers and I had to lead him on board the boat.

One morning during the war, I was in the dockyard when I met Admiral Sir Roger Keyes. He seemed to be enjoying a good laugh to himself, so I said, "Can I enjoy the joke?"

He pointed to a blue-jacket walking with a girl and said, "You see that blue-jacket? Well, the orders in the Navy are that when a rating passes an officer, he is to salute, but if his hands are engaged, he is to give 'Eyes right' or 'left' as the case may be.



When I passed him he had his left arm round the girl's waist and the other hand was clasping the girl's hand, so he obeyed the orders of the Navy by giving me 'Eyes right,' and according to instructions he was perfectly within his rights."

I could not help thinking how different the blue-jacket's position would have been, if instead of the Admiral, he had had a certain Captain, who was serving in Dover at the time, to deal with. This gentleman, no matter what the urgency of the case was, insisted on being saluted. It did not matter whether it was by a soldier or seaman, or what was going on, he would rather delay a ship or a whole regiment than miss his salute.

I have seen a man working and continually passing this Captain, who insisted on being saluted each time, and I should have liked to have heard the men's opinion of him, and what nick-name they gave him when they were alone. I could only think that, being a "dug-out," as the officers called up from the retired list were named in those days, he wanted to get in as many salutes as possible during his brief authority. I never saw any other officer, when it was a case of hurrying up, bothering whether they were saluted or not. With most of them it was more a case of getting on with the work, than being regarded as saluting posts.

Shortly before the closing down of the Officers' Department I happened to go into the office and

found this captain's two assistants, both of whom were "dug-out" Naval captains, in violent tempers. The language they were using was bad enough to turn everything blue.

"What's the matter with your tempers this morning?" I asked.

One of them threw an envelope at me and said, "Read that so-and-so insult!"

The captain had written them, without being asked, a reference of the type that any master might give a man on leaving his employment. The letter ran:

"This is to certify that Capt. —, R.N., has been working under me during three years of the war, and I have always found him to be an honest, sober, and industrious man. I have great pleasure in recommending him to anyone who may require his services."

I think I added fuel to the flames by asking, "What have you to grumble about? In my opinion the reference is more than either of you deserve."

The two captains did not seem at all pleased at this, so I thought it best to clear out.



## CHAPTER X

### AS ADMIRALTY SALVAGE OFFICER I AM KEPT BUSY BY THE GERMANS

At the beginning of the War, when no D.N.T.O. had been appointed, I rather usurped the position, although supposed to be the Chief Examination Officer. It happened in this way.

I think it was on Saturday, October 24th, 1914, and on going to my office I was surprised to see a long line of London motor-buses and lorries extending along Dover sea front to the end of the Admiralty Pier. Instead of going to my office I went to the Admiralty Pier to see what the game was.

On the landing stage I met the King's Harbour Master, who was in a great state. He informed me that there were one hundred buses besides lorries, motor cycles, and armoured cars, to be shipped in two steamers and that he had received instructions to get them away as quickly as possible. He said it would take him a week, as no gear had been sent with them and the Dover Harbour Board electric cranes were only certified to lift three tons, whilst the buses weighed four and a half tons each.

I offered my services and promised that if he would

leave me alone and not interfere, the buses, etc., should all be shipped and away in twenty-four hours. To this he agreed. The first thing to do was to get four pairs of suitable slings made. This was very quickly done by the Dover Harbour Board's own staff under the superintendence of Mr. Sutton, who at that time was Foreman and afterwards Superintendent of Works.

One of the steamers had by this time arrived, about 10.30 a.m., and berthed at the Admiralty Pier Extension. She was a most unsuitable boat of the one deck class with hold stanchions fitted round her hatchways. By this time the slings were on the pier, but I was warned not to use the cranes as they were not capable of lifting the buses. I was beginning to get a bit cross at the various small obstacles that were put in my way; but knowing all cranes are tested to about double their lifting capacity, my reply was, "They will damn well have to lift them."

The first one was lifted at about 11 a.m., and while it was being hoisted about ten feet, the remarks of the drivers and what they had to say about their buses were very laughable and did a little good by putting all hands in good humour. On getting the first bus landed in the hold, the question was how to get it into the wings to make room for the others. We first tried pushing it, but it would not pass the stanchions, so after playing with it for about half an hour I got its driver to reverse it clear of the hatchway and then run it up into the wings, and if

in doing it, he smashed it, I would take the responsibility.

The driver turned it into its place very quickly, and after this, each driver went down with his bus and drove it into position and things worked very smoothly.

After getting as many buses as could be squeezed into the holds, the hatches were put on, and as many as possible were placed on deck, the forecastle head and poop deck, and we got the steamer away about 11 p.m., then bringing the second one alongside and loading her in the same way. We worked all night and got her away at 11 a.m., on Sunday morning. Thus I kept my word with the King's Harbour Master that everything should be away in twenty-four hours.

After this I pottered about, doing what I could in the way of assisting the transportation of men and goods to France until a D.N.T.O. arrived. I think my last job of unofficial D.N.T.O. was getting the steamers berthed for embarking the Marines, perhaps better known at Dover as "Churchill's Army." As these men were marched over from Walmer early in the morning and the steamers to take them over did not arrive until late in the afternoon, the men were showing signs of being tired by the time they could be embarked.

One funny thing happened. Their rifles were lying in separate piles on the pier and the men sitting round making themselves as comfortable as possible. I, of course, was not in uniform, but must needs



walk up to a stack of rifles and unthinkingly pick up a rifle and look at it. I was at once surrounded and held by some of the Marines, and was certainly much relieved when I saw the Commanding Officer to whom I had just been speaking looking very amused and walking towards us. After explaining to the men who I was, there was a roar of laughter all along the line, which if it did nothing else did a little good by breaking the monotony of doing nothing for a little while. This incident taught me to leave such things alone in future.

A little while after this I saw a gentleman in mufti giving orders, and on being introduced found he was Captain Bairnsfather, R.N., appointed as D.N.T.O. He was in mufti because his uniform had not arrived. So I was out of that job.

The Admiral of the Dover Patrol had by now been appointed, and I went up to his office to know if I should take over my duties of Chief Examination Officer and go afloat. He laughed and said, "You don't think you are going to get that easy job, do you? Someone is coming down from the Admiralty to see you in a day or so to request you to take over a more important job."

This was to request me to take over the position of Admiralty Salvage Officer. The Officer from the Admiralty turned up and explained that with my experience, the Admiralty wished me to act as Salvage Officer for the waters under the control of the Admiral of the Dover Patrol.

I replied, "Yes, but permission must be obtained from the Dover Harbour Board which will, I am sure, be given."

I was given to understand that I should not be required to take a commission or pay, or work under the London Admiralty Salvage Officers, but be responsible to no one but the Admiral of the Dover Patrol. With the exception of pay, these conditions were accepted and with regard to payment, I was eventually told that I must accept something to make the appointment official, and finally I had to accept a small nominal sum while on "active service" and this appointment I held until the termination of the War.

I studied salvage work and made a point of going out and rescuing ships that had been in collision or got stranded. In this way I saved several vessels, the awards granted for the services going into the Harbour Board's account. During the War 284 vessels passed through my hands in this way, and a sum in the neighbourhood of £150,000 was paid to the Harbour Board in the way of salvage. The board allowed me to build four powerful tugs, two of which were of 1,600 h.p., one of 1,000 h.p. and one of 800 h.p.

On January 2nd, 1918, about 3 p.m. I was asked by the Admiral of the Dover Patrol to go over to the Outer Ruytingen and try to save the s.s. *Sussex*, one of the Federal steamers, of about 8,000 tons, from Australia with a cargo of meat for the French



army. She had got into one of the minefields and had collided with a mine, an event which had not done her very much good. Owing to the chance of there being German submarines in the neighbourhood, all hands had been ordered to leave her at dark.

Having pointed out to the Admiral that it would not be much use my going out there if there was no one aboard, I got salvage pumps aboard the tugs and left at 8 o'clock on the following morning, being piloted through the minefield by a young naval officer lent me by the Chief of Staff.

We arrived off the *Sussex* about 11 a.m., and as soon as I approached her I was hailed by the Commander of a Torpedo Boat lying almost alongside, "For God's sake, Captain Iron, come close around us. There's a mine about fifty yards astern."

I did so, noticing that the *Sussex* had her starboard anchor down and that the cable was tight, indicating that the steamer had floated on the previous tide. On getting aboard and making an examination, I came to the conclusion that the mine had exploded in No. 2 hold, the water in this hold being level with that outside, the deck lifted, and the sounding air-pipes sticking up above it about two feet, showing that the bottom had been badly punished and was probably gone. There was also some water in the boiler-room, No. 1 hold, and the forepeak. This was not so important save for the fact that we could not get any steam.

There were a few members of the crew on board—the captain, first and second officers, chief, second and third engineers, the boatswain, and two others. The rest had gone ashore, avowing their intention of not coming back. When I arrived on board the engineers were trying to get a little steam by passing coal by hand to the furnaces, standing up to their knees in water. The captain asked me what I proposed to do, to which I replied, "Take her afloat next tide and up to Dunkirk." I wired over to the Admiral to send me some more tugs, and I was sent two English and two French tugs in addition to our own Dover tug, *Lady Brassey*.

I brought the *Lady Brassey* alongside and connected one of her flexible steam pipes to the windlass of the *Sussex* so that we could get the anchor up. The captain proposed slipping it, but as his ship had already lost one I did not feel like taking the steamer up to Dunkirk with no anchors at all.

About 3 p.m. the officer in command of the torpedo boat brought me a radio from the Commodore at Dunkirk saying that all hands were to leave the steamer at 5 o'clock. I told the officer to reply that Captain Iron was on board and intended to remain and try to float the steamer next tide. To this a reply came back, "If Captain Iron is staying, all hands must stay."

By this time the weather was getting bad, the wind freshening from the westward and bringing up a

nasty sea. It got so bad, in fact, that we had to cast off the tug and trust to getting enough steam in our own boilers to get the anchor up.

Although the proper way to go about the business would have been to try and tow the *Sussex* off stern first, we could not afford to lose our only anchor, so I arranged that two tugs should make fast and tow us up to the anchor while we tried to get it with our own steam, the other tugs keeping close and be ready to assist in case of accident. I told the masters of the tugs that if the *Sussex* floated we should not be able to do much with her, towing her head first, but that they must try to keep her head between south-west and south in order to have the wind and tide on the starboard bow. We should probably blow on shore somewhere on the French coast, but anyway we should be out of the way of submarines. The wind kept freshening, and by 6 p.m. was blowing a whole gale with a heavy sea and torrents of rain. It was pitch dark; in fact, it was as dirty a night as it could be.

We made the tugs fast about 6.30 p.m. and began towing and heaving on the cable link by link, and in this way the *Sussex* came afloat. We could not see a thing, but the tugs held us well to the south of south-west. They had been towing for about five or six hours when the steamer suddenly swung round, taking the tugs with her. The captain, who was on the bridge with me, called out, "My goodness! What's the matter?" "Nothing," I replied.



We are only on shore somewhere on the French coast. Don't ask me where."

I cast all the tugs off, and they asked if they could go to Dunkirk. I gave them permission, but told them to be back by 5.30 a.m. I kept the *Lady Brassey* standing by, and soon after we caught a glimpse of Gravelines light, a light which was a great relief, for it told us that we were in a first-rate position for towing up Dunkirk Roads.

Early next day, none of the other tugs being yet in sight, I put the *Lady Brassey* on the *Sussex's* starboard quarter and in this way towed her afloat and up to Dunkirk. As we were drawing 40 ft. forward and 20 ft. aft, I felt sure she would follow the tug like a boat, and she did.

When going up the Roads, we saw the other tugs coming towards us, all strung out like a string of mackerel; but much to their disgust, I would not employ any of them and took the *Sussex* up with the *Lady Brassey* alone, anchoring her close in shore just north of the harbour.

When going up through the Roads a destroyer came near us and hailed, "Your luck's in, sir. We sighted a German submarine this morning at the very spot you took the steamer away from last night."

On arriving on shore I had a very pleasant greeting, receiving radios of congratulation from the Admiralty, the London Salvage Association, the Admiral of the Dover Patrol, the Commandant of Dunkirk, and several others.

The *Sussex* was subsequently taken into the harbour with about two-thirds of her cargo undamaged.

On September 18th, 1917, I was beginning to feel I wanted a little rest, as I had been working pretty hard at salvage work during the year. The Admiral granted me three weeks' leave, and my wife and I thereupon decided to go to Buxton to get a little change from air raids and other excitements. We arrived at Buxton on Monday, the 18th, about 5 p.m., and on the following morning went for a walk, arriving back at the hotel about noon.

I had not been sitting in the smoking room long before a waiter brought me a telegram, which read, "Required to return at once.—Tidal." (Admiral's Code word.)

Of course my wife was very much upset and wanted to return to Dover with me, but I persuaded her to stay, saying that I should probably be back in a couple of days. I caught the 12.50 train for London within twenty minutes of receiving the telegram, and arrived at Dover about 10.30 p.m.

It was a dirty night, blowing a south-westerly gale and raining hard, and as I had no house to go to, mine being shut up during my "holiday," I asked the manager of the Burlington Hotel, whom I met on the platform at the station, to reserve me a room, telling him I should be along shortly. How that "shortly" turned out will be seen.

I took a car to the Admiral's office and told the orderly there I wanted to see the Duty Officer. He



replied that the Admiral himself was waiting to see me. "I am very sorry to call you back," said the Admiral when I went into his office, "but there is a large steamer loaded with five thousand tons of refined petrol for the French army on shore at Cap Grisnez. It has been reported to me that she is likely to become a total loss, but I want you to go over and see if you can save her. A tug is waiting at the pier for you. Don't sacrifice the petrol; I will send you all the lighters I can."

I had my own opinion about lighters being any use on the pinnacle rocks of Cap Grisnez, but said nothing and went down to the pier, where I boarded the *Lady Brassey* and left for Calais. On getting well over the captain of the tug came into the cabin and reported that an air raid was going over Calais, asking if we should stop until it was all over. I said, "Oh, go on; it will be all over before we get there," and it turned out that I was right. On getting close to Calais, we were spoken to by the Examination Steamer in English, which, incidentally, was almost as good as our French. Her commander asked where we were going. "Into Calais," I replied. "You must not. You must anchor at once." "I'm hanged if I do," I replied. "I'm going into Calais." We were closing with the harbour, and on making the piers, we turned in, leaving the poor officer in the Examination Steamer still ordering us to anchor at once. We went alongside the Quai Maritime, and I took my suit-case, walked into a hotel, and left it in a corner of a room,

came out and walked to the quarters of the District Transport Office without seeing a single person. I do not know if the raid had anything to do with it, but the place was considerably knocked about, the side of one street I passed through being practically flattened out.

On arriving at the Transport Office, I asked for a car to take me at once to Cap Grisnez, a distance of seventeen miles. When I arrived I did not know how to get down the cliff until a small French boy came along and pointed out a small zig-zag path down the face of the cliff. Managing to get down by this, I found the steamer, the *Servian*, close in under the cliff, set on pinnacle rocks and pierced in several places from amidships right forward. There was not the slightest chance of doing anything with lighters to save the cargo, for the rocks, some of them ten feet high, extended a long way seaward. The steamer was suspended on the rocks, and I could walk under her quite easily at several points.

While going round and considering what was the best thing to be done I suddenly became giddy, and at that moment the Chief Officer came along.

"What's the matter with me?" I asked. "All the rocks seem to be dancing about."

Without hesitating he caught hold of my arm and ran me away from the ship, sitting me down at the foot of the cliff. He advised me not to go nearer the ship, "for," he said, "you aren't used to the fumes of petrol, and another thing, you haven't had any

breakfast." Both his statements were quite true. I was being gassed by the petrol fumes, and I had had my last meal just after leaving Derby the day before.

When I had recovered I made up my mind that I would try to get the *Servian* off on the next tide without sacrificing the petrol, but if I was not successful, I would let the petrol out, although that would be against orders. I am afraid I often disobeyed orders during the War when on salvage work.

I told the Chief Officer I was going back to Calais and that I would be coming back with tugs, when I would require him to get our tow ropes made fast as soon as possible, as owing to our not being able to get close enough to the steamer until high water there would be no time to lose. I climbed the cliff, went back to Calais, boarded the *Lady Brassey* and with the *Lady Crundall* returned to the *Servian*. On our way round I managed to get a breakfast of coffee and biscuits.

Although it was still blowing a strong westerly wind and there was a nasty choppy sea we managed to get our tow ropes aboard the *Servian*, the *Lady Brassey* touching the rocks once or twice whilst this was being done. We towed for about two hours, but without any sign of moving the ship, and at last we cast off our ropes and returned to Calais. I got a car at once and returned by the cliff path, getting the captain and engineer to come down with me, as I did not feel like getting any more bad effects from petrol fumes.



After learning from the engineer that he could open valves and let the petrol run from the good tanks into the leaky ones, I told him to do it. At the same time I advised the captain to bring all hands on shore. The weather was bad and as nothing could be done during the night it was no good risking lives for nothing. I asked that all hands should be back in the morning in time to scramble on board at low water and told the engineer to keep the valves open as long as possible, but to have them shut before the tide reached them again on the next morning.

On reaching the Hotel Maritime I enjoyed the first meal I had had since about 2 o'clock on the previous Tuesday, it being then Thursday. I felt weak from want of food and sleep, not having been in bed since the previous Monday, and had made up my mind to snatch at least a couple of hours' sleep. But no, a message came from the D.N.T.O.'s office for me to go there as I was wanted on the telephone. It was the Admiral at Dover enquiring when he should send the lighters to take off the petrol. I replied, "I have no petrol. It is a case of keeping the petrol on board and sacrificing both ship and cargo, or sacrificing the petrol with a good prospect of saving a valuable ship. I have taken the second alternative and sacrificed the petrol." He replied, "You're on the spot, so no doubt know what is best to be done, but, my God! fancy throwing away 5,000 tons of refined petrol." "I'm sorry," I said,



"but it was the only chance of saving the ship."  
"All right, old man," the Admiral replied. "I know you always work for the best."

There was no going back to the hotel for sleep. The D.N.T.O. wanted to know all particulars about the steamer and if she would come to Calais if floated. "Not much," I replied. "She is going to London." "What about floating so far with her tanks leaking?" he asked. My reply was, "If she floated with her tanks full of petrol, she will float with them full of water."

By the time everything was in order it was about time to get an early breakfast, and we left Calais about 7.30 a.m. on the Friday, the D.N.T.O. and some of his staff accompanying me and bringing some of their tugs along too in case extra power should be needed. On getting outside the harbour the smell of petrol was very strong and became worse as we approached Cap Grisnez. To minimise the risk of an accident I passed orders to the tugs for their fires to be built up with coal and not to be raked, the idea being to prevent sparks passing up through the funnels.

We reached the ship about 11.30, and after some trouble owing to the wind and sea the *Lady Brassey* and *Lady Crundall* were made fast. Then at last, after about an hour's towing, the *Servian* came afloat, and we instantly made for the Downs.

As we were crossing the Channel a curious incident happened. We sighted four or five observation balloons coming towards us, with aeroplanes firing

at them. We began to wonder what was happening and what we were in for, when a destroyer came along and informed us that the balloons were some of ours which had broken adrift, and our 'planes were trying to shoot them down. They appeared to be making a poor job of it, for we watched them until they were out of sight, and not one had come down in flames.

We anchored the *Servian* in the Downs about 4.30 p.m. and the D.N.T.O. people returned to Calais in their tug, one of our tugs remaining by the ship. Before leaving I told the captain that his ship would get about eighteen inches deeper, but that he would be perfectly safe. I landed at Deal, went to Dover by car, and after reporting to the Admiral, went to the Burlington to have some dinner and go to bed. As may be imagined, bed had become a positive obsession with me by this time. I saw beds with soft mattresses and pillows wherever I looked, and the sight of a real bed in my room at the Burlington was a vision of something like heaven on earth. But would you believe it, I was snookered once more!

I had been in bed and asleep just about an hour when a waiter came to the door and said I was wanted on the telephone. "Tell 'em to give you the message," I mumbled, half asleep. He went away, only to come back a few seconds later and say, "They can't give a message. It's the Admiral himself that wants you."

Out of bed I had to tumble, and matters were made worse by the fact that there was a dance going on in the hotel, and I could not reach the telephone without going through the ballroom. So I had to dress once more.

On reaching the telephone I was told by the Admiral that he had just received a message from the captain of the *Servian*, saying that she was gradually sinking and suggesting that he ran her ashore.

"Will you go out and see what's the matter," said the Admiral. "I have had a car sent round to take you to the tug."

"All right, sir," I replied. "I'll go right away," at the same time realising that it meant another night out of bed. The last night I had spent in bed was Monday, and it was the approaching Saturday morning.

So away I went, but when I reached the vessel I could see nothing wrong. Hearing that the captain had turned in, I sent a boat to bring him to the tug, thinking that he might have the job of getting up and clambering about a bit. He came aboard, and when I asked what the trouble was he coolly replied, "The steamer seemed to be getting deeper, but she has stopped now."

I had told him she would go down a little, but keeping what I was thinking to myself, I merely replied, "All right. We will get rid of you at daylight." I sent a wire to the Admiral saying that



there was nothing the matter and proposed, with his approval, to send the steamer on to London with two tugs. The answer came back giving approval, and at the first sign of dawn the *Servian* left in tow of two tugs.

I landed at Deal and took a taxi to Dover, going straight to the Admiral's office, but I was surprised on getting there to find that I could not speak. My voice had entirely gone, and I had to write down what I wanted to say to the Admiral.

He told me to get back to Buxton as soon as possible; so I went to the hotel to get some breakfast—I had to write the order for it—and having obtained a railway warrant, I caught the 10 a.m. train. About the time we reached Derby my voice came back to me, to my delight, and on my waking up in my hotel in Buxton on the following morning I found that I felt quite fit. In fact I walked about a mile and half to Church with my wife. I was a little surprised at feeling so well, considering that I had not been to sleep since the previous Monday, five days before, and had been on the go all the time from leaving Buxton on the 12.50 train on Tuesday until arriving back about 10 p.m. on the following Saturday.

On the 8th March, 1917, after having been at sea all day and for several previous nights, I made up my mind to turn in early and try and get a little



sleep, but thought it doubtful if I would, since the Germans were about and would be getting up to some of their monkey tricks.

About 10 o'clock I went up to bed, began to undress, and said to my wife, "If any one calls me up to-night, I will tell them to go to the devil," and at once the telephone rang. "Tell them to go to the devil," said my wife, but as it was the Admiral on the other end of the line, it was a case of discretion being the better part of valour.

The message was, "I want you to get away at once and steer E. by N., until you find something. I can't tell you over the 'phone what it is, but you know who are out to-night, and you must go in complete darkness. Everywhere that a light might show must be covered up."

I replied, "All right, sir, but of course you know E. by N. will soon take me into the minefield."

"No matter," was the reply. "Get away."

"All right," I said, jokingly, "I don't mind being blown up; in fact, I rather like it."

By the time I dressed again a car was waiting to take me to the *Lady Brassey*. On the way down to her, there was a little time for thought, and on getting on board, I 'phoned to the Admiral's office and asked, "Is the object we are going after anchored or driving." The reply was, "She can't anchor and is drifting."

"About what time did the accident happen and how far off?" I asked.

"Just before we 'phoned you, and about fourteen miles E. by N., from here," came the reply.

We at once left with everything covered up, and it was one of those dark black nights, in fact, so dark we could not see each other on the bridge. Our crew consisted of ten men all told, including the Master, engineer, mate, two deck hands, a boy, second engineer, two firemen, and a wireless operator. We had no guns or fire-arms of any description. Perhaps that was fortunate, for we should have probably done more in the way of wounding ourselves than hurting the enemy.

While going down the harbour towards the Eastern entrance I sat down and calculated the distance the vessel we were after would drift with a three knot tide in the time it would take us to get to her, plotting our current course on the chart. After passing through the entrance, instead of steering E. by N., I told the Master to steer E. by S.  $\frac{1}{2}$  S.

After a short time, we began to smell oil and petrol, but although it was too dark to see the water, this gave me the idea we were about on the track where there had been a spot of trouble, and shortly after a Verey light showed up overhead, setting us wondering a bit whether some German was skylarking above us. But nothing happened and we still went on. There was a fresh wind and moderate sea, but as it was so dark that nothing could be seen it almost seemed like looking for a needle in a bundle of hay.

However, I kept the course E. by S.  $\frac{1}{2}$  S., and after going ten to eleven miles, a black object loomed up close alongside, and a voice called out, "Is that you, Captain Iron?" I think I was never so pleased to hear my own name. I replied, "Yes," and the Commander of the Destroyer (for such it proved to be), said, "My orders are not to interfere with your course, but to circle round you." I replied, "All right, circle away."

We still continued and after going another two or three miles, saw a light right ahead blink three times. Then darkness prevailed again. The destroyer came close and enquired if we had seen the three blinks, and on our replying "Yes," he said, "That's the *Llewellyn*." This was the first time I heard the name of the vessel we were after. It was a light cruiser.

Certainly my luck was in in steaming thirteen or fourteen miles straight from Dover to a disabled vessel drifting in a strong tide and on a black night without lights, making her right over our stem head, when by being only half a mile on either side of our course, we should have missed her altogether.

We steamed up to her and commenced towing N.W., for Dover, the destroyer circling round us both. We arrived and passed in the Eastern entrance about 7 a.m., of the 19th, and berthed her at the Eastern arm, having been away about nine hours. After she was fast I saw one of the tugs come through



the entrance and alongside the arm astern of the *Llewellyn*. Two naval gentlemen landed and came up to me, not looking very pleased, and perhaps, owing to having spent another night at sea with a hard day's work before me, I was not in a very jovial mind either.

They came up, and the first salute I got was, "Where did you find this vessel?"

"About S.E., fourteen miles off," I replied.

"What course did you steer?"

"E. by S.  $\frac{1}{2}$  S."

"Weren't you ordered to steer E. by N.?"

This question made me a little cross and perhaps rude, for I replied, "I take orders from no one, and if I had steered E. by N., I should, like you, have failed to find her. I think no one would expect to find a vessel drifting in a three knot tide at the place where the accident happened some three hours after."



## CHAPTER XI

### THE "TERROR" TORPEDOED AND SALVED

ON Thursday, October 18th, 1917, I went to bed about 10 p.m., with the intention of trying to get some rest, having been working for two days and nights on end.

As usual in such circumstances I said to my wife, "If anyone rings up on the telephone, tell them to go to the devil."

And about 2.30 a.m. the 'phone did ring. The message was from the Duty Officer at the Admiral's Office and was a request to proceed at once to Dunkirk. The *Terror*, one of our great monitors, had been torpedoed and put on shore about half a mile north of the harbour.

The officer said, "Hurry up. A car is on its way to take you to the *Lady Brassey*." That gave me a chance to say, "Give me time to put my trousers on. I can't go without them."

The reply came with a little sarcasm. "Ah, I thought you would be in a good humour."

It was about 3 a.m. when I left Dover Harbour, the weather being fine, the night dark, and a fresh Westerly wind blowing. I arrived at the *Terror*

about 7 a.m. She was aground, lying with her head to the shore in about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  fathoms of water, and on my going on board I found that she had been torpedoed in the fore-side of the amidships by three torpedoes whilst she was lying in Dunkirk Roads.

The *Terror* was one of two heavy monitors specially built in 1916 for bombardment service with the Dover Patrol. She was of 7,200 tons, 405 ft. in length and with a beam of 88 ft., the plan of her hull being rather like that of a flat-iron. The tremendous beam in comparison to length was mainly accounted for by the anti-torpedo bulge, which projected about ten feet beyond the hull proper. She was not designed as an ocean-going vessel. Her speed was only 12 knots, but she carried a pair of 15 in. guns of great range, besides eight 4 in. and two 3 in. anti-aircraft guns.

The water in the hold, from the stem to the after bulkhead of the mess deck, was level with the sea outside and rose and fell with the tide. After getting the *Lady Brassey's* salvage-pump to work and finding that it made no difference to the level of the water, and as the wind was freshening and setting up too much swell for the tug to remain alongside, I told the captain that we must take the *Terror* into Dunkirk.

His reply was, "We can't. She won't float long enough."

"She will have to," I replied. "At any rate I am responsible for that part of the business."

I sent a radio to Dunkirk informing them we should go into the harbour at high water, somewhere about noon.

The *Lady Crundall* arrived in response to a radio I had sent, and on seeing the position of the vessel, both the *Lady Brassey* and *Lady Crundall* were made fast, one forward and the other aft, and managing to tow the *Terror* afloat we made for Dunkirk Harbour. Just as we were approaching the entrance, the Captain called out to me, "Here is a damn fine mess. Just got a signal we are not to go into the harbour on any account." To this I said, "Please send a signal from me—The *Terror* is now outside in a sinking condition. If she sinks, the responsibility rests with the officer keeping us outside." We at once received the signal, "Enter immediately."

We got inside and as far up the harbour as we could get, so that there would be as little water as possible round the ship at low water. On making an examination at low water, it did not take long to make up our minds that practically all her bottom, from the twin 15 in. gun forward to the stem, was blown out, and on examining inside, we found that the lower deck, used as a mess deck, was started away from the sides and frames, and the lower deck stringers and also the thwart stringers at the watertight bulkhead were started and distorted.

In order to make a quick job I at first tried building cement boxes over these places, but found there was not sufficient time for the cement to harden before



the tide rose. So I at once abandoned the idea and arranged with the chief carpenter, Joseph S. Callacott, who was really a splendid man, to get all his staff and fit timbers on the deck between each pair of frames and across the bulkheads and tom them down by shores to the next deck above, as well as securing and making watertight the companions leading to the lower hold. Of course we could only work when the tide was down, and time was also lost owing to the Germans continually trying to bomb us from the air. My air raid shelter was in the Captain's sea cabin under the plating of the 15 in. guns.

When the work of fitting timbers between the frames and shoring the deck was completed, I telephoned to the Admiral at Dover and asked for instructions as to what port the *Terror* was to be brought, saying she would be ready to leave on Sunday morning, provided the Germans did not do serious damage with their bombs in the meantime. The answer came through, "You mean a month on Sunday." "No," I said, "We shall be ready to leave the morning tide of the 13th, and in any case the Germans are making it warmer for us than I like."

"If you really mean you are leaving on Sunday, the orders are to come to Dover, but if you make a mistake and go to a port further west, no one will say anything." I replied, "If the orders are for Dover, I must come to Dover, and she can go to Portsmouth from there." I thought if on the way to



Portsmouth instead of Dover, as ordered, we got mined or torpedoed, an enquiry might be made as to my reason for disobeying orders. But of course if we arrived at Portsmouth without trouble, no question would be asked, and a few days would be saved.

On Saturday evening, we had about three hours to complete the shoring, etc., before the tide came up and washed us out. Then lo and behold, the precious bugle sounded for all hands to go to their air raid shelters, and as this meant losing the tide, I went to the chief carpenter and said, "We are as safe here as any where else." To which he agreed. "As for the men," he said, "if you stop down here they will stop."

We closed the companion to shut out all light, and went on with our work to the tune of bombs dropping round us. This did not worry us very much, for the Germans had failed so often in their many previous attempts to get us that I saw no special reason for their succeeding this time. So we shut ourselves down and continued our work, which we just managed to finish before the tide washed us out. About the same time the Germans went back home.

After the raid, the Captain came down and said, "Why were you not in your air raid shelter?" "We were doing better work," I replied, "We can now leave here next tide" (about noon on Sunday the 13th).

"What about these men?" he said.

"They stayed here under my orders, and besides we were as safe down here as anywhere else," I replied.

"Yes," he said, "providing a bomb had not struck one of the magazines."

"In that case it would not have mattered much where we were," I said, "and it would have depended on our past life where we should be now."

We left Dunkirk about 1 p.m., for Dover, and on leaving the harbour the Germans had another go at us without results; they came for us again when in mid-channel, but then they had the anti-aircraft guns of the *Terror* to contend with and soon left us, though they had another try as we were going into Dover Harbour, and were even still trying when I went on shore to report before going home.

On the passage to Dover, I asked the Captain not to exceed seven knots in order not to put too much strain on the temporary repairs. At that speed the vessel proceeded quite comfortably and made no, or very little, water above the mess deck, although of course the lower hold from the guns forward was full. On talking to the Captain on the way over, I mentioned that when we went to Portsmouth the safest plan would be to tow stern first so as not to exercise more pressure on the mess deck than necessary and chance forcing it up, I told him he would find she would follow the tugs all right as she was four or five feet by the head.

She left for Portsmouth on the following Tuesday about 5 p.m. The weather was not looking fine with every sign of a strong wind, but as I was not going in her it was no business of mine. I was surprised, however, to see her being towed and steaming head first and I wondered if the mess deck would stand it.

About seven o'clock the next morning my telephone rang, and a voice said, "Here's a hell of a mess. The *Terror* is abandoned."

"Whereabouts?" I enquired.

"Between Hastings and Rye," was the reply. "The Admiral has left in the *Viking*."

"All right. I will go down at once."

I felt sure that the cause of the trouble was driving the ship head first into the heavy seas off Beachy Head.

I left at once in the tug *Lady Duncannon* and on rounding Dungeness made out the *Terror* being towed towards Dover by the *Lady Brassey* and the *Lady Crundall*. She appeared to be in the same trim as when she left Dunkirk, and on getting close to her we saw several minesweepers close by full of her crew and on the deck the Admiral and some of the officers of the ship. We went close enough for me to get aboard, and on my asking what the trouble was I was much relieved when the Admiral said, "There is nothing the matter with your temporary repairs."

There was some talk of proceeding on to Portsmouth, but for one or two reasons I suggested to



the Admiral that it would be better if we were to return to Dover and make a fresh start. His reply was, "Then you go with her."

The cause of the trouble was that she had been towed head first and had also steamed instead of being towed stern first. No doubt the idea was to make the passage quickly, but as the ship was so much down by the head she simply dived into the heavy seas off Beachy Head, her deck being flooded and pumps and everything movable being washed away.

We returned to Dover, and pumps, etc., were again fitted on to be ready for emergencies, and on the Friday I received instructions to be on board the *Terror* by 1 p.m. on Saturday.

About 8 p.m. on Friday I received a notice from the Duty Officer of the Admiral's Office to the effect that a large Admiralty tug had gone on shore at Dungeness and that I was required to proceed there at once. I thought this was a chance of getting out of going in the *Terror* as for one or two reasons I was not very keen on going. So I replied, "Send a car and I will go to Dungeness at once."

But before I could get away I received another message saying, "You are not to leave Dover, but must hold yourself in readiness to go in the *Terror*. The tug must stay where she is until you get back."

So my hopes were quickly shattered.

About 12.30 p.m. on Saturday I boarded the *Terror* and on reporting to the Captain had the feeling that I was not very welcome. Trying to



make the best of an uncomfortable job, I suggested that I should get the tugs made fast, whereupon I was told to get them made fast if I liked. This was not very cheering, but I had our two large tugs made fast on the port and starboard quarters and gave instructions to the *Lady Duncannon* to keep close at hand. I had my own reason for keeping her handy.

We passed out of the harbour about 3 p.m. and made good progress, the *Terror* following the tugs like a boat. But when we had got down as far as Folkestone I was surprised to hear the captain say that he was going to turn the ship round and proceed head first in the proper way, "no ship being built to make a passage stern first."

This led to a little argument, and I reminded the captain of what had happened when he tried to get down head first on the first occasion. He said that he was captain of the ship and would turn her round if he wished.

"Certainly," I said. "By all means," and then hailed the *Lady Duncannon* to come alongside.

"What do you want her for?" I was asked.

"Because I am going on shore," I replied. "You say the proper way to proceed is head first and I say stern first is the proper way for a ship in this condition. You, as Captain, have a right to do what you think best, so I will go on shore."

However, the *Terror* was not turned round and proceeded stern first. After a little while I pointed

out to the Captain that we should make better progress if the engines could be put slowly astern sufficient to take the drag off the propellers. At first the Engineer objected owing to the risk of the back slides getting hot, as there was no arrangement for cooling them as fitted for the front shoes. But after a little persuasion he said he would give us ten revolutions. This went on for a bit and then we had another chat and the revolutions were increased to twenty, and after a few more chats the engines were making ninety revolutions, and things went merrily.

On getting down towards Beachy Head, I thought it best to inform the Captain that probably when we got into the strong cross tides rounding the Head, the ship would no doubt sheer about a bit, perhaps two or three points, doing this for about half an hour, but there would be no danger. When we arrived off Beachy Head she did begin to sheer and the Captain became anxious; in fact he accused me of losing the ship, but not wanting to enter into any argument and knowing the ship was all right, I went down off the bridge and amused myself with a cup of cocoa and a pipe until we were round the Head and the ship stopped sheering.

We arrived off Spithead at 7 a.m., on Sunday, having come stern first from Dover in about sixteen hours. Our tugs were then cast off and Admiralty tugs turned us round and took us up to Portsmouth head first. As soon as we were anchored, I left and

caught the first train home, arriving about 7 p.m., leaving about 8 o'clock the next morning for Dungeness to work on the Admiralty tug.

As far as I know, the *Terror* is still in commission. In the year 1933 she was sent out to Singapore to act as depot ship, the shore accommodation there not being adequate. In view of her peculiar construction and the fact that she was designed for inshore work, there was a certain amount of risk attached to this voyage. The only other voyage to be compared to this in length undertaken by such vessels was that of two monitors of the "River" class, which went out to East Africa in 1915 and destroyed the German cruiser *Konigsberg* in the Rufiji River.

On Sunday, June 30th, 1918, just after I had got home from church, the telephone bell rang and I was requested to go at once in the *Lady Brassey* to Hastings, as a large steamer in ballast had been torpedoed and put on shore there. A little while later the Chief of Staff rang up and said that as it was such a fine day he would like the trip down with me. So we arranged to leave about 1 p.m.

After passing Rye we made out the steamer, or rather the fore part of her from the after part of the bridge deck forward, for the remainder of the steamer was under water, it being then high tide.

On arriving at the forward end of the bridge deck I found that the steamer was the *Wilton* of Glasgow,



3,218 tons. She had been torpedoed on the starboard side in the way of No. 4 hold. The torpedo had blown about forty feet of the starboard and port sides out and had cut the shaft tunnel in two. In fact, the stern of the *Wilton* was open to the sea.

The bulkhead between Nos. 3 and 4 holds was pierced in several places. The engine-room and stokehold were practically open to the sea and the height of water in the steamer corresponded to the rise and fall of the tide.

After having a good look round the Chief of Staff said to me, "This one has beaten you." I replied, "I don't think so." He laughed and said, "When will you get her afloat?"

At the time I had not the slightest idea what I was going to do with her, but to keep up the old joke which he and the Admiral always had about me that no matter what kind of a job I had it always took three days, I replied, "Oh, on Tuesday."

He then said, "If you will make a list of what you require, I will send what you want by a destroyer."

I made out a list, which included a diver and wading dresses. Among other things mentioned were two 8 in. motor pumps, but when these arrived about 6 p.m., on Monday, we found there were no hoses, and on enquiring why they were not sent, I was told that only pumps were mentioned, nothing having been said about hoses.

After the Chief of Staff had gone, I was standing on the after part of the bridge deck, watching the



water splashing about and thinking what I should do, and made up my mind to deal with the bulkhead and tunnel door in the engine-room first.

I went to the Chief Engineer and enquired if he had any bolts and nuts he could get at and found he had a bag full on deck, so I requested him to take the covering plates of the forward auxiliary steam pipes off and cut them into plates about eighteen inches long, and to put a hole through the centre of each large enough to take the bolts. I then went to the Chief Officer and requested him to have the hatch covers of the fore hatch taken off, make them into two rafts, and also get the carpenter to make three or four dozen soft wood wedges of different sizes.

By the time all this work was done it was getting late, and as the tide was again rising, I made up my mind to let the *Wilton* fill again with the flood and tackle her on the next ebb. Having everything in readiness, we made a start as soon as the tide left the deck about 7 a.m., on Monday, and put one of the rafts in No. 3 hold and one in No. 4, with two men on each; those in No. 4 were given the plates and bolts, with instructions to keep going backwards and forwards across the bulkhead as the water fell, and when they found a hole, to put one of the plates over it, and those in No. 3 hold were to put on the nuts and screw up hard as possible.

While this was being done, the tunnel door in the engine-room was screwed down as tight as

possible and a diver was sent down to wedge it tight with the soft wood wedges driven between the doors and frame. He was also to fix shores against the door to help resist the strain that it had to stand owing to the tunnel being open to the sea. The position inside the *Wilton* now was: the after hold (No. 4) was completely open to the sea; the bulkhead between No. 4 and No. 3 holds, was holed and fractured in several places, allowing water to become level with that outside; there was water in the engine-room and stokehold level with that in the after holds, and in No. 2 hold there was 12 feet. Thus there was water flowing out and in with the tide all through the ship, with the exception of No. 1 hold, which was dry.

One of the pumps was rigged into No. 3 hold, the second one, owing to the winchman kindly dropping it when getting it on board, was smashed and rendered useless, which left me with only one pump and the loss of a quantity of bad language.

One of the tugs, the *Lady Crundall*, was got alongside and the five 6 in. hoses from her 12 in. pump were passed into the engine-room to deal with the water there when required, and a flexible steam pipe connected to one of her boilers. As a joint in one of the auxiliary steam pipes was broken, a length of the tug's flexible steam pipe was fitted to it, so there would be no delay in connecting up and having steam all through the ship when we were ready. This work was going on throughout Monday as the

tide allowed, and as soon as the tug could get alongside pumping was commenced in the engine room and the water lowered to the lower grating.

I then got the Engineer to send one of his men down in a wading dress and see if he could start the ballast pump under water, but he demurred at first, saying there was a risk of bursting the pump. To this I said, "Let the damn thing burst, I am responsible if it does." The man went down and managed to start the pump without much trouble.

About midnight of Monday, July 1st, I got him to disconnect the suction pipes from the bilge and deck service pumps also under water, and I had now three independent pumps working in the engine-room supplied with steam from the tug's boiler, and so could continue pumping after the water was too low in the engine-room for the tug's pump to deal with it.

To my surprise and relief, we found as the tide rose on the Tuesday morning that the bulkhead between Nos. 3 and 4 holds had been made watertight with the patches and that what little water leaked through was easily dealt with by the 8 in. pump which had been put into No. 3 hold. The carpenter and two men went down into No. 3 hold to shore the bulkhead. While the water was still low in the engine-room I got the engineers and diver to go down in wading dresses to disconnect the bilge pipes in both wings at both sides of the engine-



room bulkhead and so let the water flow into No. 3 hold and be dealt with by the 8 in. pump.

About 6 a.m. on Tuesday, July 2nd, the water was well down all through the ship and the *Wilton* was ready for floating; but owing to the tide not flowing sufficiently she did not float on the next tide. About 5 p.m. of July 2nd, we managed to get her afloat and proceeded in tow towards the Downs with the *Lady Brassey* towing and the *Lady Crundall* lashed alongside, pumping and supplying steam to the ballast pumps, etc.

After getting a start, I sent a radio to Dover for two tugs to meet us. The wind was N.E. light when we left Hastings, and I had hoped this would fall away as the sun went down; but instead of doing so, it freshened and by the time we arrived at the South Sand Head Light Vessel it was blowing a strong wind approaching gale force with the sea making up rapidly.

Here was a pretty mess, I knew it would be too dangerous to take the *Wilton* round the North Foreland on account of the heavy sea we should meet there. We held on to the *Lady Crundall* until she was nearly jumping on board of us and then had to cast her off.

This meant that we were without steam, and we very soon got seventeen feet of water in the engine-room. Fortunately No. 3 hold was leaking only a little and the motor-pump kept that under, so I had little fear of the steamer sinking rapidly unless



the bulkhead between Nos. 3 and 4 holds gave way. If that happened the ship, of course, would go down with us all like a stone.

I had to keep this to myself and put on a smile to prevent any possibility of a panic. As it was, the Third Officer, a cheerful kind of man, kept reporting the water still rising in the engine-room, and at last I told him he need not trouble to report any more.

I must confess, however, that every time the *Wilton* made a plunge a cold shiver ran down my back. I felt sure the bulkhead had gone. We kept as near the land as was safe and let the *Lady Brassey* hold us head to sea to save the strain on the bulkhead as much as possible.

About 1 a.m. on July 3rd the *Lady Crundall* came close to us and reported a radio from the Admiral, saying that he did not want to interfere, but if I liked to go into Dover as soon as it was light he would have a buoy ready for us.

Of course I replied that we would. We could not go in before daylight as the harbour was full of ships and in complete darkness, and in the circumstances daylight seemed a terrible long way off. But as soon as it began to get light we took our chance and made for the harbour, and I must say I was very relieved when we moored to the buoy. I immediately got both tugs alongside and soon lowered the level of the water in the engine-room and stokehold.

The next day the weather was fine, and the tugs

being placed as before, we made a start for the Thames in charge of a pilot. At Gravesend we received orders to proceed, after bottom survey, to the Millwall Docks. We arrived there without incident, and after seeing the *Wilton* in drydock I was not sorry to bid her good-bye and get back home. Nevertheless, I was pleased at not having been beaten by her.

One afternoon a destroyer had a bit of a collision in the harbour, and as she had split open her side plating she was run on shore to prevent her sinking.

The temporary repairs should have been my job, but on this occasion I was not instructed to carry on with them as the Dockyard people were going to do the work. But at low water I went out of curiosity to see what the damage was like, and found several Dockyard men under an officer. There were several sheets of steel on her deck and men were measuring up the extent of the damage and making templates for the steel plates they intended to cut.

It struck me that there was a great deal of work going on for so small an amount of damage, the widest part of the rent in the vessel's side being only about an inch and a half. It looked as if they would take something like a week to complete the repairs.

Of course I ought not to have made any remark, but I could not help myself and said, "Why don't you close the rent with soft wood wedges and get the vessel into drydock at high water?"

The officer in charge was most indignant and said, "You don't know what you're talking about. Tell me what wedges do you think will stay in that plating?"

I had no need to reply, for the Admiral, whom I had not seen in another boat, broke in with, "Perhaps it would be as well to leave it to Captain Iron."

He then asked me when I could get the destroyer afloat, to which I replied, "She will be in drydock by the next high water. All I want is two or three sacks of soft wood wedges."

These duly arrived, and it took half an hour to put them in, the vessel being made watertight. She was afloat and in drydock before high water.



## CHAPTER XII

### HOW WE SAVED THE "MERAUKE"

SOME part of the story of the *Merauke* will appeal only to those who closely understand the salvage of ships, but I feel sure that the greater part will be appreciated by everyone, for this account will give an idea—and I shall try to make it a vivid idea—of the kind of thing one has to contend with when ships get into trouble.

On the afternoon of January 28th, 1929, I was on my way to Dover from London by the 4.15 train from Charing Cross, when a gentleman in the compartment passed me the evening paper. In it I read that a large steamer had been in collision off the Varne Light Vessel and had been towed on shore at Hythe, where she was lying sunk. As soon as the train arrived at Dover I took a taxi to the harbour and found that the two Dover tugs, *Lady Brassey* and *Lady Duncannon*, were standing by the steamer.

It was blowing a strong south-westerly gale, with a heavy sea, and when about 7.30 p.m. I received a radio from the captain of the ship, the *Merauke*, asking me to go down to him, I took our salvage steamer *Dapper* with men and gear and left for



Hythe. I hardly expected to be able to reach the steamer, as the sea was running very high, but I made up my mind to have a shot at it. On getting clear of the harbour the decks were practically under water to the rails owing to the sea breaking over us, but we drove the old boat through it until we arrived off Folkestone. Then the weather became so bad that the vessel was like a jibbing horse and refused to go any further, lying bobbing twice in one hole and wallowing her rails under water. I decided that it was useless to try any more and that we had better return to Dover.

We were waiting for nearly half an hour for a smooth between the seas in which we could turn round, and during this operation I ordered all hands off the deck in case an unlucky sea should break on board while we were broadside on and wash some of them overboard.

At last we let three big seas pass, and as soon as the third had gone by I jammed the helm hard a starboard and followed it.

It is a curious fact that in a gale the heavier seas generally run in threes, and for a few minutes after each three there will be a comparative smooth for a few seconds. This was what I waited for, and we managed to turn round without being damaged, just missing the first sea of the next three, which struck us on the port quarter instead of amidships. Although it filled up the decks it did no harm as everything was closed up ready for it.

We arrived back at Dover about 11 p.m. and were followed shortly after by the *Lady Brassey*, having given instructions to the *Lady Duncannon* by radio to remain near the steamer so long as the crew were on board no matter how bad the weather.

After ordering all the gear in the *Dapper* to be trans-shipped to the *Lady Brassey* and all hands to remain on board in readiness to leave at six o'clock the next morning, I received, about 5.30 a.m., a radio from the *Lady Duncannon* informing me that the weather was worse. I thereupon cancelled my order until 6 p.m. and then took a taxi for myself and Mr. Sutton, the Harbour Board Superintendent of Works (who always accompanied me on salvage work when shields were needed, and a splendid man for the work), to take us to Hythe to see if it would be possible to board the *Merauke* with the aid of a lifeboat.

We arrived at Hythe just about daylight and found that it would be impossible, for the sea was running all over the steamer, which was lying with her bows under water and her propeller high out. By this time we were both cold, wet, hungry and soaked with spray. So after having some breakfast we returned to Dover.

About 2 p.m. I received a radio from the *Lady Duncannon* saying, "Have managed to get *Merauke's* crew off and am returning to Dover." It appears that the *Merauke's* people made a signal that they wished to abandon ship, so the master of the *Lady*

*Duncannon* took the risk of going alongside and taking them off, and received considerable damage in doing so. I met the Captain of the *Merauke* on arrival, and after enquiring as to the conditions at the steamer, came to the conclusion that nothing could be done that night's tide. Accordingly I cancelled the previous orders and ordered all hands the next morning at 6 a.m., 30th January.

On questioning the Captain, I learnt that the *Merauke* was owned by the Rotterdamsche Lloyd, of 6,670 tons gross, carrying about 12,000 tons of cargo, 432ft. long, 54 ft. beam and 34ft. depth of hold, on passage with cargo from Bremen to the Dutch East Indies. She was an open sheltered deck ship, with the bulkheads extending to the main deck only and had been in collision near the Varne and struck on the starboard bow in No. 1 hold, a little before No. 1 bulkhead, which was also crushed in one corner, allowing water to flow in both holds.

The Dover tugs, which were near at the time, went to her rescue and managed to get her to the nearest sandy beach, and she sank as she grounded. At high tide the water was ten feet above her fore deck and extending over the bridge deck and flooding the saloon situated under the bridge, the after part of the vessel was floating, and at high water the propeller was ten feet out of the water. Of course we discovered this after getting on board on the morning of the 30th January.



At 7 a.m., of the 30th January, we left Dover in the *Lady Brassey*, taking the crew of the steamer with us, and arrived on board at 10 a.m. The weather had moderated, though there was still a heavy sea, but we managed to get alongside on the *Merauke's* starboard quarter. We found the water in No. 1 hold was flowing and ebbing with the tide and keeping level with the water outside, and at low water was three feet below the main deck. In No. 2 hold the water flowed and ebbed with the tide but not at the same rate, and at low water the water in this hold was only eighteen inches below the main deck. By this I formed the opinion the more serious damage was in No. 1 hold and our first attention must be given to this. The water in the forepeak and forecastle remained practically level with the shelter deck, which of course showed these had filled overall and no damage was to be feared forward of No. 1 bulkhead. The water in the engine-room was up to the wing furnaces, about ten feet deep. The fires were of course out and the vessel without steam which could not be raised until the water was got out of the stokehold. To do this, the copper steam pipes, which the tugs carry for this purpose, were connected by one end to a special valve on the tug's boiler for use in salvage work, and the other end was passed through a porthole in the engine-room casing and down to the steam pipe of the *Merauke's* ballast pump, one of the joints being disconnected to allow our connection being made.



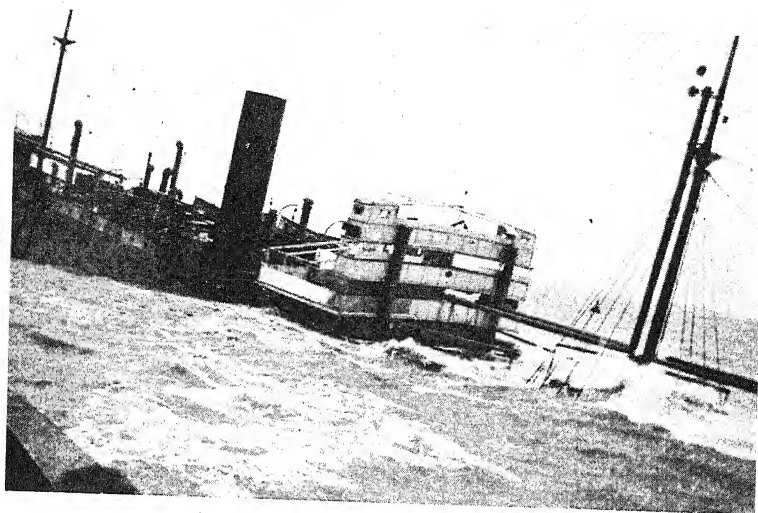
By this means steam was supplied to the ballast pump from the tug's boilers, thus enabling the stokehold to be pumped out and steam raised in the *Merauke's* boilers, being required for the purpose of hoisting our heavy pumps on board, of which there were six, each weighing from four to six tons.

The saloon and amidships accommodation were flooded and the water streaming out through the seams of all the doors.

On examining the deck, I found the *Merauke* was showing signs of straining across the fore side of the engine-room casing. The butts and seams of the margin planks round the casing were opening, and the clips securing the water deck service pipes were working backwards and forwards over an inch. This damage was getting worse each tide.

At high tide the *Merauke* was lying at a fore and aft angle of five degrees and her foredeck submerged to amidships, the water forward being just over the lookout bridge, which was ten feet above the shelter deck, and at aft she was cocked up so the water was only touching the 12ft. mark on her stern post. At low water the lower part of the hawse pipes were in the water, and the water just touched the 15ft. mark on the stern post.

Altogether things began to look a little bit hopeless, and putting about two thousand pounds' worth of gear on board was a pretty good gamble. But thinking of the old proverb, "A faint heart never won a



WE MANAGED TO GET ALONGSIDE ON THE "MERAUKE'S"  
STARBOARD QUARTER



fair lady," I made up my mind to do my best to win this one.

From half flood to half ebb, the seas were running over the foredeck from the bridge deck forward to the stem.

The hatches of Nos. 1 and 2 holds were washed away and lost, which allowed the water to break into these holds and wash a good portion of the cargo out of the steamer, and incidentally, allowing us, when the sea was smooth, to work only five or six hours per tide. When there was any swell the divers could not work until the tide was below the deck owing to the seas breaking across the decks and filling their boats.

On getting on board on the 30th January, the first thing to do was to send two divers down, as soon as the tide permitted, to examine and report on the damage, and in the meantime to get the water lowered in the engine-room and stokeholds to enable steam to be raised by means of the flexible steam pipe from the tug. At the same time we had to relieve the weight in the afterpart of the steamer that was hardly waterborne as much as possible, and so try to prevent damage caused by straining.

The divers reported that the *Merauke* had been cut into just abaft the collision bulkhead, leaving a wound 12 ft. 6 ins. wide and 14 ft. 6 ins. deep. The shipwrights were at once put to work on the after deck, clear of the water, to make a shield 14 ft. wide and 16 ft. deep to cover this wound. Of course

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before this could be done, the divers had to go down again with some thin laths and make a template of the steamer's plates round the wound, in order that the shield could be made to fit well in where the plates were indented. While this was being done the hoses of eight steam and motor pumps, ranging from 12 in. to 8 ins., together with the hoses of the *Lady Brassey's* 12 in. pump, and the *Dapper's* 8 in. pump, were put down No. 1 and 2 holds and well lashed to the coamings. The lashing was to prevent them being washed away, and let them be handy for connecting to the various pumps. The pumps themselves were got on board and well lashed in readiness to use when the time came, if the steamer lasted so long, and I took the precaution to send a message to Dover ordering all these valuable pumps to be immediately insured.

After getting the templates, the work of making the shield was put in hand under the supervision of Mr. Sutton, with as many shipwrights as could work on it. We had to hurry in order to get it in place as soon as the water left the deck on the next tide, and about 8 p.m. of the 30th it was put over the side, weighted at the lower end sufficiently to make it just floatable in a perpendicular position. Unfortunately, owing to the sea making up again and washing us off the foredeck we had to leave it only partially secured and trusted to Providence and the sea not washing it away during the night.

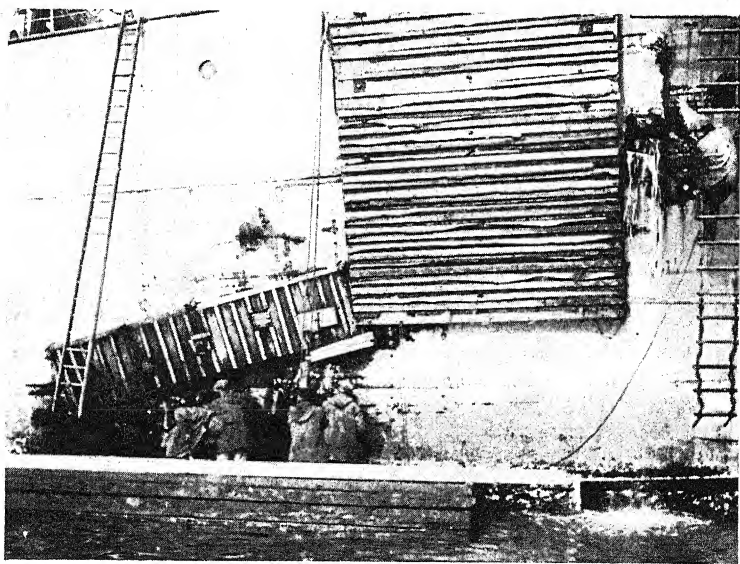
We were fortunate, and by nine o'clock the next



[Photo: Amos & Amos]

#### THE "MERAUKE" BEACHED OFF HYPHE

The *Merauke* being battered by high seas after being beached off Hythe, following collision.



[Photo: Amos & Amos]

#### SALVAGE BY PATCH

Showing the patches fitted to the *Merauke* whilst ashore off Hythe, enabling her to be floated and towed into dock for permanent repairs.

[Face page 200]



morning managed to get it properly secured, and I thought the worst of our troubles were over. All the pumps were connected to their various hoses and were pumping at full speed; but our hopes were again blighted, for we could not control the water, which rose inside the steamer as fast as the tide rose outside, and at high tide we had ten feet over the forward deck again.

I again examined the damage caused by straining and found it was increasing; but it was no use getting downhearted, and as I had already spent a few hundred pounds, a few more would not make much difference. I might as well be in for a sheep as a lamb.

Of course I knew there must be more serious damage than the divers had discovered, and as soon as the tide had fallen enough for the divers to go down, they were instructed to make another survey, and in the meantime, all the pumps that had been under water were opened up and put in order for another trial. But before the divers could make an examination the weather again became bad, freshening into a S.W. gale, and the heavy seas breaking over the *Merauke* made it impossible to work anywhere on board. The weather and sea were again getting worse, and I reluctantly came to the conclusion that it would not be right to keep the people on board, for if the vessel broke in two it would probably mean serious loss of life, and the afterpart of the vessel would then go under water.



I had all our gear secured as much as possible, and about 7 a.m. of February 1st, I ordered all hands, including the officers and crew, to abandon the ship and go on board the *Lady Brassey*, which was alongside the starboard quarter and being pretty well punished.

On the way to Dover there was a tremendous sea running, and after getting away from the steamer I went to the tug's saloon to see how the crew were getting on and found them all sitting round and smoking. I could not help smiling, knowing what effect Channel seas have on deep water sailors, and as I expected, within about a quarter of an hour they were all seasick and looking very sorry for themselves. The salvage steamer *Dapper* had parted from her anchors during the night, so, in order to get rid of one trouble, I ordered her to return to Dover.

On reaching Dover all hands were ordered to muster on board the *Lady Brassey* at 7 a.m. of Saturday, February 2nd, and the weather having moderated, we left on board the *Lady Brassey*, the *Dapper* having received fresh anchors and following us to take the place of the *Lady Duncannon* which had gone to the assistance of another steamer stranded at Dungeness.

I took the opportunity to put another 12 in. pump on board the *Lady Brassey*. On arrival at the *Merauke* we found the sea still breaking over the steamer. The divers could only work through low

water, but they managed to secure the second shield and plug and wedge as much as possible.

On examining the condition of the steamer we found that the danger of her breaking in two had increased considerably. All seams and butts were more open and were working badly, and now, in addition to the steamer being under water forward, the stokehold bulkhead had commenced to leak and there was twelve to thirteen feet of water in the stokehold.

The forward engine-room bulkhead was leaking and the water was gaining in the engine-room. Altogether, things were not as bright as they might have been. But it was no use looking on the black side. The only thing to do was to keep cheerful and get on with the work as quickly as possible to prevent Father Neptune from getting the upper hand.

We immediately connected the *Lady Brassey's* steam pipe to the *Merauke's* ballast pump and started lowering the water in the stokehold and engine-room sufficiently to allow steam to be raised in the boilers.

About 5 p.m., the representative of the Underwriters and the Marine Superintendent came and asked me to sign a "no cure no pay" contract to refloat and deliver the vessel in Dover. To say the least of it, I thought this was rather late in the day, but since I had all the plant on board, I thought I might as well go in for a gamble. So I signed the agreement, although the prospect of saving the steamer was now looking very black, as she might

break in two at any minute. This fact alone made it none too safe for us to work on board. Had she broken, the afterpart would have sunk without any warning and, like the forepart, would have been ten feet under water.

Every tide she remained aground the conditions were getting worse. Her bow was working further down into the sand and increasing the strain on her afterpart owing to it only being partially water-borne.

During the same afternoon (Saturday, 2nd February), the weather again became bad, the wind increasing into a moderate S.S.E. gale and the sea breaking and rolling across the steamer from the bows to abaft the amidships. All work had to cease, and the question was again raised as to abandoning the steamer, for the hands, quite rightly, were not looking forward to spending a night on board a vessel in the state the *Merauke* was now in. She looked more like a half tide rock than a vessel.

I made up my mind that if the *Merauke* was abandoned altogether, the stokehold and engine room would fill, and that the extra weight would be sufficient, with the straining that was already taking place, to break her in two. So after consulting with the people concerned, it was decided to send every one that could be dispensed with back to Dover in the *Dapper* with orders to return with another 8 in. pump as soon as the weather moderated.

The *Lady Brassey* was made doubly fast under the lee starboard quarter, where she could just lay,



missing the heaviest of the sea, and so keep steam supplied to the ballast pump and prevent the water gaining in the engine room and stokehold. Captain Shotton, Mr. Sutton and myself stayed behind, and with the crew of the *Lady Brassey* watched and continually put out fresh ropes to prevent her breaking adrift.

About midnight, I thought I would go on to the *Merauke's* bridge and see what things were looking like; managing to climb up, I found it certainly worth the trouble. One could see nothing of the ship from the bridge forward, and the sea as it ran over her was like breakers beating on rocks. I was admiring the sight, when the thought struck me that I was doing a foolish thing, for if she broke there would be no chance of being saved. I made my way aft again and after seeing that we were still holding the water in the engine-room and stokehold, went on board the *Lady Brassey* and had a rest until daylight.

The weather moderated towards Sunday, 3rd February, and the *Dapper* with all hands returned about 10 a.m. The sea was still very rough and the divers could not go down until late in the afternoon. Their orders were to examine the two patches and ascertain if they had worked loose and at the same time to tighten up all the bolts, after which to continuing wedging and plugging where possible.

In the meantime all the pumps were again placed in Nos. 1 and 2 holds and commenced discharging



at the rate of about 3,000 tons of water per hour. For a time the water was under control, and smiles began to show on the faces of the trojans. Alas the smiles arrived too soon, for with the rising tide the pumps were once more overpowered. Although we were able to deal with the water in No. 2 hold, it rose in No. 1, overflowing into the shelter deck, and rushing like a waterfall down No. 2 hatch. At high water the forward part of the *Merauke* was again some ten feet under water.

We came to the conclusion that there certainly must be a large open wound which the divers had not discovered, but it was no use pulling a long face and making every one downhearted, although hands were getting tired. We were fortunate in having plenty of good food, if very little sleep, and all hands stuck to the job and determined to win through.

As soon as the water was off the foredeck, the divers went down in search for this other wound, and to help them, the pumps were worked to set up a suction from the outside. This idea worked so well that one of the divers was actually drawn into the hole and signalled frantically to us to stop the pumps to allow him to get out. Fortunately he was unhurt.

The pumps, however, had done their work in assisting the divers to find the hole, which was a vertical fracture 5 ft. long by 2 ft. wide, the lower part just above the bilge keel but under the sand and extending about a foot past No. 2 bulkhead

into No. 2 hold. Mr. Sutton and his shipwrights worked all night making another shield 7 ft. 6 ins., by 4 ft. 3 ins., to cover this wound and have it ready for fixing as soon as the tide allowed. On Monday morning, 4th February, the shield was put over the side and fitted, the pumps were started, and to every one's relief, they were found to control the water and lower it in the two holds and forepeak.

On the rising tide the holds were found to be practically watertight, and as the water was pumped out the forepart of the steamer rose with the tide out of the bed she had made. For the first time for a good few tides her foredeck remained above water, allowing us to remove the cargo in the hold as was necessary to allow the pumps to get at the water. The pumps were kept going all night to lighten the vessel and get her as much as possible on a more even keel and relieve the strain on the afterpart.

The water in the engine and boiler rooms was pumped down as low as possible and steam was raised on the boilers.

The next morning (February 5th) the *Lady Brassey* was made fast on the port quarter of the *Merauke* with the *Dapper* lashed alongside, and they managed to tow the vessel's stern round. Thus she lay at right angles to the shore instead of broadside, but owing to not having sufficient water under her bows, she would not come afloat. I ordered the *Lady Brassey* to continue towing until the tide fell

sufficiently for the *Merauke* to take the ground fore and aft in that position instead of swinging into her old bed.

I asked the Captain if he would arrange for dinner at 6 o'clock instead of 7 o'clock that evening, as I expected she would come afloat at 7 p.m. The *Lady Brassey* came alongside about 10.30 a.m., and I gave orders to her Master to make fast again on the same quarter at 6 p.m., and try to tow her astern into deep water, when we would then let go the anchor to give him the chance of getting his tow rope in and making fast forward. He was then to turn us round and tow us to Dover.

After all arrangements were made, I began to take things more easy, as there was nothing to be done in the meanwhile except to continue pumping and sucking as much water out as possible. The three patches, to Mr. Sutton's great credit, were found to be perfectly watertight, which was marvellous considering the conditions under which they were fitted.

About 6.30 p.m., we sat down to dinner, which I must say I really enjoyed, owing to my mind being free of anxiety.

I told the Chief Officer of the arrangements I had made with the tug, and told him that as soon as the tug blew her whistle he was to let go the anchor. About ten minutes to seven, he came to the mess-room door and said that the *Merauke* was moving astern. Everyone save myself jumped up and rushed



on deck. I knew now that everything was all right, so I remained to finish my dinner.

As I came out of the mess-room I noticed a fog coming up from the westward. This did not look too good, but having saved the ship I did not worry about such trifles. At this moment a gentleman who represented the owners of the ship came to me and said,

"It isn't safe to take this ship to Dover."

I asked him why.

"She has five degrees list to starboard," he replied.

"Oh," I said. "She may have twenty before we get to Dover."

This was only a joke, as I did not anticipate her increasing her list, but the old gentleman took it seriously and fetching his suit-case from the chart-room, went on board the *Dapper* which was lashed alongside and remained there. I admired him greatly for one thing. He told me that when he was away from home he always sent one or two telegrams a day to his wife to prevent her worrying about his safety, and he asked my permission to use the *Lady Brassey's* wireless. He certainly stuck to his rule to the full whilst he was with us, for when the accounts began to come on to me I found one from the Post Office for about £25 for radios exchanged between the *Lady Brassey* and Holland. Whilst I paid it I could only hope that the good lady's mind had been kept free from all anxiety about her husband.



By the time the *Lady Brassey* was fast forward and the anchor hove up we were in a dense fog, so when we were under way I radioed to the Southern Railway Marine Office at Folkestone and asked if they would sound their reed horn, which they use to guide their cross-Channel boats into Folkestone during fog. They were kind enough to have the horn sounded at once and they kept it sounding until we let them know we were past Folkestone. This allowed us to keep closer in shore than we should have otherwise done.

Now, for some reason, the *Merauke* was rapidly increasing her list, and, of course, it was at once thought that one of the patches had begun to leak. Men sent down below reported, however, that there was no increase of water and that everything was all right. Still the list continued to increase, eventually becoming so bad that we could not stand on the bridge without holding on.

The fog cleared as we neared Dover, enabling us to make out the lights, and when turning to go through the entrance of the harbour the captain came to me and said with a laugh, "You were right when you told Mr. — that we should probably have a list of twenty degrees when arriving at Dover. We have twenty-two."

Owing to this fact I beached the ship in the harbour, but the list worried me, for I felt that something had been going on that I had not been informed about. I found out the truth the next day. The

steamer had longitudinal ballast tanks, and for some reason the engineer received orders to pump the port tanks out. This, of course, accounted for the list, but no one would say who had given the orders.

After this, everything was simple—only a matter of making shields of sufficient strength to allow the *Merauke* to proceed to Rotterdam.

The case eventually went to arbitration, and the Dover Harbour Board was awarded the sum of £14,000 for five days of very hard work and anxiety.

## CHAPTER XIII

### ADVENTURES ON THE GOODWIN SANDS

DURING my life as Harbour Master of Dover I have had a fair amount to do with the Goodwin Sands, which form what is, I suppose, the most dangerous shoal in the world. At all events they are the most notorious, which fact is no doubt partly accounted for by the fact that they are in such close proximity to one of the busiest, if not the busiest, narrow water on the globe.

They begin about six miles to the eastward of Dover and extend about ten miles in a north-easterly direction. They are marked by four light vessels, four lighted buoys and three ordinary buoys. They appear to differ a good deal in constituency in different places, and in the worst if a vessel remains on them for more than three tides the chances of getting her off are small.

A few years ago the Italian steamer *Sal Valice* ran on to the south part of the Sands, known as the Calliper, and another vessel, thinking that the *Sal Valice* was anchored, ran close to her and, of course, also grounded. I went off to them on the fourth tide, but as it was low water I had to cross



the Sands in a galley, and when I reached the steamers they had both gone down to such an extent that I stepped out of the galley on to their decks. They had sunk about twenty-five feet into the Sands in about twenty-four hours.

Some years ago Mr. Jarrow, of the noted firm of that name, came to me and said that he wanted to put up two masts on the Goodwin Sands to act as the mark posts of a measured mile for testing the speed of destroyers. I accompanied him to the Sands and his men rigged up boring plant; but after getting down to a depth of seventy feet the plant was still bringing up dry sand. The project therefore had to be abandoned. Curiously enough, former work on the Goodwin Sands had resulted in very different discoveries being made, as I shall shortly show.

For instance, in 1817 the Trinity Board was considering the possibility of erecting a lighthouse on the Sands and conducted some experiments. They found that the sand only reached to a depth of fifteen feet. A Mr. Boys, an antiquarian and historian of Sandwich, maintained that at a depth of six or seven feet a hard and tenacious bottom could be reached.

But in October, 1849, the Trinity Board carried out, under the direction of Sir J. H. Pelly, Deputy Master of the Trinity House, and Captain Davis, R.N., an ambitious experiment which had very different results. An iron cylinder, 2 ft. 6 in. in diameter was sunk in ten lengths, being forced down



under pressure, and went down for no less than seventy-eight feet before stopping at solid chalk.

Previously Admiral Bullock, inventor of a "Safety Beacon" for the Goodwin Sands, conducted some boring operations in 1840 and found that after seven feet the sand became so dense and cohesive that his boring tools broke even at that comparatively small depth. The truth may be that the solid bed does not by any means lie evenly throughout the whole extent of the Sands.

The Goodwin Sands are of perennial interest to the general public, at all events, not only on account of the many stories of shipwreck told about them, but because of the mystery of their origin. There seems to be little doubt that they were at one time dry and cultivated land. The early chroniclers speak of the existence of three islands off the easternmost coast of Kent, and that which is now the Goodwin Sands was called the Island of Lomea.

There seems to be no reason to doubt the existence of this island, but the name Goodwin has been very persistently connected with the Sands from ages past, and there must be some reason for that connection.

We have, however, little more than legend to go on, and there are several legends to choose from. According to one Earl Godwine was returning up the Channel at the head of his fleet when he went aground on a newly made shoal which had made its

appearance during his absence. He was drowned and all his men with him, and so the shoal became known as the Godwine or Goodwin Sands.

Unfortunately for this story it seems fairly clear that the Earl was not drowned, but died suddenly by choking on April 15th, 1053, whilst dining with King Edward at Winchester. Moreover, history tells us that the shoal was not formed until 1099.

Other legends closely connect the Goodwin Sands with Tenterden Steeple, but different legends connect them in different ways. The Island of Lomea was, we are given to understand, part of the domain of the Earl Godwine, and on one occasion when he was fighting the "King of Kent" he was so hotly pressed by the enemy that he swore that if he was allowed to return to his estate of Lomea that he would erect a steeple at Tenterden in honour of the saints. It was, however, a case of "The Devil was sick, the devil a monk would be; the Devil was well, the devil a monk was he," for on his return home safely he forgot his vow, whereupon the vengeance of Heaven came upon him, the earth shook, the sea rose, and the Island of Lomea was swallowed up in the waters.

It is with the greatest difficulty that we learn whether the Earl was a conscientious man or not, for another story tells us that he was so keen to fulfil his vow and build the promised steeple that he neglected the dams and walls which kept the sea out of the Island of Lomea and spent the money which

should have been devoted to this purpose on the erection of the steeple.

Nor have we finished with legends about that steeple, for again we are told that the See of Canterbury, to whom William the Conqueror had given the lands which formerly belonged to Earl Godwine's son, Harold, did nothing whatever to repair the sea walls surrounding their property and having taken the materials intended for the work used them to build Tenterden Steeple. The result of their neglect was that the walls fell into so great a state of neglect that eventually the sea won the battle and destroyed the island.

What value can be given to these legends in which Tenterden Steeple plays so constant and important a part it is difficult to say, for there is every reason to believe that there was no steeple at Tenterden Church at all until the middle of the 16th century.

Passing from legend to such facts as are ascertainable from ancient histories, we find that there is evidence of the destruction of islands, including that of Lomea, in a terrible catastrophe in the 11th century.

There were two terrible storms, one in 1014, during the reign of Edward the Confessor, and another, by far the worse, in 1099, during the reign of William II. In both cases there appears to have been great destruction of property and life, and as far as the cause goes, we must imagine that there



was some form of submarine earthquake. The Belgian chronicles also speak of these events, for at the same time they suffered great incursions of the sea.

The *Saxon Chronicle* says of the later inundation, "In the year 1099, on the festival of St. Marton, the sea-flood sprang up such a height and did so much harm as no man remembered it ever did before, and this was the first day of the new moon."

Possibly the Island of Lomea had suffered in the first storm of earthquake; in any case its ruin was completed in the second, and at the same time islands further north were menaced and vast lands were submerged. In this catastrophe the island of Heligoland, once part of the mainland, was cut off.

William Lambard, who wrote in 1570, says that about 1099 "there was a sudden and mighty inundation of the sea, by which a great part of Flanders was utterly drenched and lost, whilst at the same time various places in England and Scotland also suffered most dreadfully, but especially the estates of Godwyn, Earl of Kent, which were first covered with a fine light sand, and afterwards overwhelmed by the waves and so destroyed. The estate not only remaineth covered by the waters ever since, but it is become withal a most dreadful gulf and ship-swallower."

I may mention here that in view of this event a former great cataclysm by which England was suddenly severed from France, which I have mentioned in my previous chapter dealing with the



history of Dover, does not seem to be altogether outside the bounds of possibility.

Some theorists have objected to the story of the Island of Lomea, saying that the fact that nothing but sand and sea-shells have been discovered above the solid bed during recent boring experiments proves that there never could have been a fertile, cultivated island here. It seems reasonable, however, to suppose that the constant wash of the sea could have easily removed loam entirely, replacing it with the sand of which it has copious supplies.

I cannot leave the subject of the origin of the Sands without mention of another theory. It is to the effect that they never were an island, but that they became a menace to shipping through being left by the sea, possibly at the time of the great cataclysm spoken of above. In other words, when the sea rushed over part of Flanders and other places on the coast of the Continent it receded from the coast of Kent so that the Sands, once well at the bottom became more near the surface.

Although the Sands are usually referred to as "quick" they can be walked upon when they are dry, and at times such things as cycling races and cricket matches have been played upon them. Tourists often get boatmen to take them out to the Sands and amuse themselves looking for relics of wrecks.

Once, however, an extraordinary and sad accident befell a number of visitors. Three men had gone out to the Sands in a boat, but in landing ran their boat

on to the sunken timbers of some unfortunate ship and knocked a hole in her. There was nothing for them to do but stay where they were and trust that a passing ship would notice their unhappy plight before the tide rose.

But though they ran about and waved their arms frantically no one noticed them with the exception of the crew of a barge. To their dismay this barge passed by, although it was quite clearly to the marooned men that they had been seen.

It is hard to think of a more cruel fate than to be compelled to watch the tide come slowly higher and higher, bringing the slow but sure menace of death. And I have unfortunately to relate that the men suffered this agonising fate.

Subsequently enquiries were made, and when the crew of the barge that had left the men to drown were questioned they replied that "they did not think there was anything wrong with the men and imagined that as they were rushing about and waving their arms they were playing tricks or skylarking."

So notorious are the Goodwin Sands that I do not have to enlarge on the number of shipwrecks which have occurred on them. From the very earliest times they have been a menace to ships in the Channel, but, of course, matters are very much better now than they used to be. The use of steam has lessened the toll of the Sands; more skilled navigation, together with the lightships and

buoys, has enabled ships to keep clear of dangers that otherwise were practically unavoidable.

Amongst the many disasters that have taken place on the Sands one of the worst, if not actually the worst, was the loss of a whole fleet in a single night. This was during the "Great Storm" of 1703, when incalculable damage was done throughout Britain by one of the worst hurricanes that has ever swept our country. This fleet, under the command of Rear-Admiral Basil Beaumont, was anchored in the Downs on November 26th, 1703. The weather, which had been very threatening for some days, suddenly took a turn for the worse, and by nightfall a terrific and unparalleled hurricane was blowing. This storm raged for close on eight hours, and when it had blown itself out, of the thirteen ships not one was afloat. Four large ships had gone down on the Sands with the loss of all their crews save seventy men. The rest had been driven on to the mainland and had been battered to pieces. In all about 1,200 officers and men perished.

To give an idea of what a shipwreck on the Goodwin Sands is like I will give a few details of a personal adventure.

About midnight on January 29th, 1919, I received instructions to go to the assistance of a large American steamer stranded on the west side of the Goodwins near the Gull lightship.

After giving orders for the tugs *Lady Crundall* and *Lady Duncannon* to follow, I left in the *Lady*



*Brassey* and found a steamer of about 10,000 tons lying across the Sands, west by south half south, three cables from the lightship. As soon as I saw her position I was afraid that she was doomed. It was after high water and about two or three hours ebb, but we shaped a course to get to her. About midway between the lightship and the steamer we got into two and three-quarter fathoms, so as the tide was by that time ebbing quickly we were compelled to back off the edge of the Sands. After signalling to the steamer that we would come back to her as soon as the water flowed again we anchored in seven fathoms.

About 6.30 a.m. of the 30th, we again got under way and stood in towards the steamer; but we had again to anchor in two and a half fathoms.

I then hailed the Deal lifeboat, which was lying alongside the steamer, to come and put me abroad. This they did, and on my going to the bridge and looking at the compass I found her head was east half south. This meant that she was lying broadside on to both the flood and ebb tides. On taking soundings round her I found the sand was already banking up on the port side amidships and came to the conclusion that the only chance, and that a very slight one, was to jettison the cargo as quickly as possible. I sent ashore and got about two hundred men off and set them to work throwing the cargo overboard. This consisted principally of foodstuff such as flour, canned fruits, coffee, etc.



But the sand beat us. On the afternoon tide I had four powerful tugs on her stern and two forward, trying to tow her astern, but although we could cant her about two points, she went back to her original position as soon as we stopped towing.

There was nothing for it but to keep on discharging the cargo from all hatches. When the tugs came to us on the next tide, about 2 a.m. on January 31st, the sand had silted up to such an extent that the tugs could only with difficulty get close enough to put their ropes on board. They towed until two hours after high water, but without result.

The crew of the steamer were a funny crowd and put me in mind of when I was a child and used to go to sweetshops to buy "all sorts." Of course they were a product of the war and the master, an elderly Norwegian, had been, I was told, a farmer for some years in America before the war.

On taking soundings again on the morning of the 31st I found the sand had banked up amidships, with only thirteen feet of water on it at half ebb and about nineteen feet at the two ends, the sand scouring away from both ends and banking up amidships.

About 2 o'clock in the afternoon I went into the saloon to lie down on a settee and get a little sleep. Just over my head was an electric lamp with some ornamental tassels on it, and as I lay looking about me my eyes caught this lamp and I noticed that the tassels kept on quivering slightly. I got up and

looked at the other lamps and found the same thing going on. I began to think out the reason for this; the saloon doors were shut, so it could not be due to a draught, and there was not the slightest movement in the ship to account for it.

After a little thought I came to the conclusion that straining was taking place below, although I could not hear anything. Then the fun commenced.

I went to the captain's room and told him that in my opinion the steamer would break in two that night, and I advised him that he would be wise to get anything of value, such as chronometers, etc., and the crew's effects put into the tugs where they would be safe.

He was very indignant and said, "Do you think I am going to leave my ship, sir?"

"No," said I. "And I am not going to leave her either, but if you do as I suggest there will be less to think about when she does go."

"How do you know she is going to break?" he asked.

"I don't," I replied, "but I have a nasty feeling that she will."

"If she does, what will happen?"

"She may go over on her broadside, and as we cannot run like cats things will be rather uncomfortable. We are now lying with about ten degrees list to starboard."

On leaving the captain I went to the coxswain of the lifeboat, which was lying alongside amidships,

right under the steamer's boats, and told him what I thought would happen, and I suggested to him that it would be well to shift his boat right aft clear, for when she did break he might get one of the boats dropped on top of him in the panic I was sure would occur.

I knocked all the labourers off and sent them ashore, and after sending a radio to the Admiral at Dover, telling him what I expected, I went and had some tea. It was now about 4 p.m. There was a fresh wind with snow and a swell, and about half an hour later rivets in the engine-room began to pop off like pistol shots. Then the safety-valve of the centre boiler broke off at the flange and most of the steam and water blew out of the boiler. The next thing to go was the main shaft, which broke in the tunnel, together with the shaft pedestals which broke off their seatings. Then there was a rest for a while and I went into the saloon, for it was bitterly cold on deck.

About 7.30, just as I was going on deck, the event I had been waiting for took place. The vessel broke in two at the after bulkhead of the engine-room. All the lights went out, and as there were no oil lamps we were left in complete darkness.

There was no need for hurry, but to my surprise the order to take to the boats was given, and a panic started which I was helpless to allay. A rush was made for the boats, and in the case of two of them at least the after fall tackle were let go with the forward



ones still fast so that the boats hung down perpendicular, the people being shot out of them like rats out of a bag. Fortunately the tide was setting towards the lifeboat which had a busy time picking the people out of the water. Although it was pitch dark the lifeboatmen saved them all.

There was nothing more to be done. I was leaning against the rail of the bridge deck when the vessel, which by this time had righted herself, fell over to about 25 degrees to port. I reckoned that she was then on her bilge and would go no further. While standing against the rail someone bumped into me. He turned out to be the pilot and said, "What are you going to do?"

"Stop where I am," I replied. "What else can one do?"

"Let's try and get aft to the gangway," he said.

"Not much. We are fairly safe here, but as we cannot see where she is broken we may fall into the hole if we move."

The pilot had an electric torch, the battery of which was nearly run down, but it gave just enough glimmer to let us see the deck when held close down to it, and by this means we managed to creep aft, where we found the lifeboat had come back and was lying at the gangway. It was fortunate that she had moved aft or some of them falling out of the boats would certainly have been killed.

Things now began to get quieter and the boats were being lowered in a much more sensible manner.



Of course they were drifting away on the strong tide, but they were being picked up by the tugs.

I then went into the lifeboat and ordered the coxswain to put me on board one of the tugs, but as this would have taken some time and I thought of the men who had been picked out of the water and were shivering in their wet clothes I countermanded the order and told him to land me at Deal, where I arrived about 10.30 p.m.

On going off to the steamer next morning about high tide I found her altogether under water with the exception of the upper bridge. Parts of her are still showing at low water, and through her presence the Sands in that vicinity have quite altered their shape, a fact which can be seen by comparing the chart of that day with the new one.

I believe that it is not very widely known that there have been several attempts to erect lighthouses on the Goodwin Sands, but the shoal has always won the battle. This is rather curious considering that lightships proved themselves quite efficient.

The first lightship in British waters was the Nore, established in 1732, and she proved so successful that Trinity House placed a lightship at the North Sand Head, Goodwin Sands, in 1795.

None the less, several private persons busied themselves with lighthouse projects of one kind or another, and in 1836 Mr. William Bush submitted to Trinity House a plan for a beacon. It was never erected. But in 1840 Captain Bullock succeeded in

putting up a "Refuge Beacon." This was a massive timber mast, having a flagstaff at the summit and a gallery round it capable of holding thirty or forty persons above the reach of the sea, the idea being that shipwrecked persons might be able to reach this one stable point on the Sands during storm and shelter there until it was possible for them to be taken off.

In the shelter, bread, water, and spirits were stored, and the words, "Hoist the Flag" were written in eight languages. The hoisting of the flag was, of course, to let the coastguards know that shipwrecked mariners were present on the beacon.

The first of these beacons was run down through the carelessness of a Dutch galliot, but Captain Bullock put up another, which disappeared in December, 1847. Its fate is a mystery. Whether it was run down by a ship or carried away by wind and wave was never discovered, though many held the theory that it had been struck by a large piece of wreckage and so destroyed.

A more ambitious scheme was, however, put in hand by Mr. Bush, who, scorning a mere mast, made strenuous attempts to erect a lighthouse. In 1842 he began to sink a massive caisson into the Sands, the caisson having a steel cylinder attached to its upper part. It was intended that at the top of the cylinder a gallery, shelter, and powerful lamp should be fitted, the whole being more than 40 ft. above high water level. The caisson was sunk about 25 ft. into the sand, where it came to a stop and was

supposed to be resting on solid chalk. This presumption was backed by the fact that it stood up against a violent storm.

Unfortunately during the night of October 15th, 1842, an American ship, the *Nancy*, was flung with terrific force against the caisson, and not only was the caisson wrecked but the unfortunate ship was broken up, all hands perishing.

Notwithstanding this setback, Mr. Bush determined to try again, and two years later began to sink yet another caisson. The idea was much the same, the gallery being intended to contain 30 persons and the whole structure about 150.

The base of the structure was sunk 24 ft. into the sand and, as in the former case, was supposed to rest then on a solid foundation. The building of the upper part then went on, and on January 19th, 1845, Mr. Bush and a party of friends had a meal of roast-beef and plum pudding at the summit of the lighthouse.

"I think I may fairly state," said Mr. Bush in a letter to a friend at Lloyd's, "that another inhabited island is now added to her Majesty's domains, which will form a nucleus for batteries and fortifications, as for a Harbour of Refuge in Trinity Bay in the Downs, and when completed, be the key of the British Channel and thus form a second Gibraltar. I have commenced boring, to ascertain the substrata of the Goodwins, and at fifty feet beneath the platform have found nothing but hard sand, nearly as solid as rock itself."



It is impossible not to ask here why Mr. Bush had not "prospected" in the Goodwin Sands before putting up his lighthouse, not after. However, so far so good. The lighthouse was built, and Mr. Bush and his wife actually lived in it for some weeks, whilst every day when the weather was favourable scores of visitors came out in boats to see them and congratulate them on having conquered the Goodwin Sands.

Then the blow fell. But this time it was not delivered by wind or wave. It came from Trinity House. Mr. Bush was about to put the finishing touches to his building and install a lantern when Trinity House wrote him a letter requiring him "to take down and remove the stack altogether" and not on any account to put a lantern into it, for its position had been as badly chosen as possible. It had been placed in the middle of the Sands and would lead vessels into danger instead of warning them against it. It had been reported that two vessels had only narrowly escaped destruction, mistaking Mr. Bush's lighthouse for the Trinity Beacon on the north-east part of the Sands, and the Deputy-Master of Trinity House said that "the building was quite ridiculous where placed; it was a most dangerous structure, and ships approaching it must be wrecked on the Sands."

It must be stated that although Trinity House had always been against the erection of beacons or lighthouses on the Sands, pinning their faith to lightships and buoys, Mr. Bush had taken advice as to



the best position for his lighthouse, the advice being given to him by no less a body than the Admiralty.

There was subsequently some very acrimonious correspondence on the subject from which, as far as can now be made out, Mr. Bush had every reason to be aggrieved at his treatment, for he had spent £12,000 of his own money on the project and had only tried to serve humanity. In consequence of orders Mr. Bush took down the upper structure of his lighthouse, leaving only the caisson, and there, deep in the Goodwin Sands, it remains to this day.

There have been many other attempts to place stable beacons of a less ambitious kind on the Sands, and in 1849 Trinity House itself essayed the task. Although this beacon, placed near the inner edge of the eastern portion of the Goodwins, was said to have been sunk to no less a depth than 72 ft. it followed the fate of all the others, and in 1879 it was overthrown in a great storm, the last of such structures ever to be tried.

Although we say many hard things about the Goodwins we have to remember that but for them there would be no Downs, which provide a safe anchorage in the stormiest weather. The Sands extending for about ten miles parallel to the shore, leave a channel of about seven miles where ships can lie in safety, and though the Downs were of far greater service to shipping in the days of sail and often contained a hundred or more craft, they

continue to be of assistance. At low water the Sands provide a complete barrier and even at high tide they prevent heavy seas getting into the Downs. Only at certain states of wind and tide are ships likely to be troubled in the Downs, and so highly have they been prized in the past that at one time they were regarded as a harbour of refuge for the fleet. There was a "Navy Yard" at Deal and a high tower for telegraphic purposes nearby so that messages could be taken from the fleet in the Downs and transmitted to the Admiralty with the least possible delay. In the Downs, Caesar's fleets came to anchor on both the occasions on which he landed on British shores.

An entire volume could be devoted to a history of the Downs, and it would be in miniature a history of the British Navy. There have been battles, demonstrations, scares, shipwrecks, waterspouts, and jollifications in the Downs. There is one item which I do not remember ever having seen in any history book which I am sure will be of general interest. On December 16th, 1805, H.M.S. *Victory* came to anchor in the Downs under jury masts straight from the Battle of Trafalgar, and with Nelson's body on board she remained there for three days, owing to a heavy gale from the north.

Some years ago men of Deal and other places used to make something of a living "sweeping" for anchors which ships had lost in the Downs, and from time to time very curious things have been brought

to light, varying from ancient guns to Roman wine-vessels. One of the most extraordinary things ever brought up by sweeps was a complete post-chaise. The probability is that this was swept out of some unfortunate vessel wrecked on the Goodwins.

One of the strangest projects ever put forward in connection with the Downs and the Goodwin Sands was suggested by Mr. Bush, whom I have previously mentioned. His idea was the construction of a vast harbour in Trinity Bay, the opening in the middle of the Sands, and the reclamation of the Sands themselves. Believing that a firm bottom could be reached at a depth of not more than fifteen feet, he suggested the sinking of caissons for the building of a vast sea wall eleven miles long, by means of which some 7,000 acres of the Sands would be reclaimed.

He proposed the flotation of a company with £250,000 capital, but added that the company would earn great profits from various quarters. Not only would there be dues from the ships using the harbour, but the land could be put under cultivation, whilst there was treasure to be salvaged from the Sands.

"Innumerable ships," he said, "freighted with the most valuable cargoes, have been here swallowed up; and although much of what those vessels contained was doubtless of a perishable nature, it is fair to presume that many of those sunken wrecks contain solid and substantial treasures, such as gold and silver, the extent of which no idea can be formed."



The project came to nothing, and it is perhaps fortunate that no investors were found for the proposed company. The depth to which sand extends had not then been fully realised, and it is certain that had any money been forthcoming for Mr. Bush's magnificent but over-optimistic scheme the Goodwin Sands would have proved themselves, as ever, great "swallowers."

I will end my stories of the Goodwin Sands with two personal experiences of affairs there during the War.

About 2 p.m. one day I received instructions from the Admiral of the Dover Patrol to go out and try to save a steamer which had broken her propeller at No. 7 buoy, which marked the eastern edge of the minefield extending from the South Goodwins to the Sandetti Bank. The vessel was driving towards the minefield.

I received orders to try and get her before she got into the minefield, but that if she got in I was on no account to go in after her.

On arrival at No. 7 buoy I found that the steamer was about half a mile inside and still driving further in. It seemed pretty ghastly watching her and expecting to see her go up at any minute with her crew of thirty men, and what the men felt about it I did not like to imagine. I sent a radio to the Admiral informing him of the position and asking his permission to go in after her.

The reply I received was, "The tide is running to the west-south-west, and will set her out again."



I then sent another radio message, "Although tide setting west-south-west it is neap tide of no strength and the wind is stronger than the tides."

The reply to that was, "If you like to come back to the South Sand Head and then proceed along the edge of the Sands until abreast of the wreck *Montrose* you can then proceed to the steamer. It will be very dangerous and the greatest caution will be required."

Although I knew it would be dark before we could get back to the South Sand Head I made up my mind to try it. When about half way back we fell in with one of the "P" class boats, which drew about seven feet of water, proceeding eastward. I made a signal to her asking if she would lead us through the minefield to the steamer, and she replied, "Yes, but follow directly in my course and return in exactly the opposite direction."

So round we went and followed the "P" boat, at the same time watching the course that we steered very carefully so as to be able to get back in safety. We came up to the steamer, which was then about two miles inside the minefield, and after getting fast, towed her out on the opposite course to that which we took going in.

After getting clear I felt that I might get into trouble for entering the minefield against strict orders, but I had the satisfaction of knowing that we had probably saved thirty lives and the steamer, both great considerations in those days.

The next morning I went to the Admiral's office, expecting trouble. I said, "That steamer is anchored in the Downs."

"Did you go into the minefield after her?" asked the Admiral.

"Well," I replied, "on our way back to the South Sand Head we fell in with a 'P' boat and I asked her to lead us in to the steamer and she consented."

To this the Admiral replied, "You know as well as I do that those boats draw only seven feet, while you were drawing thirteen feet six inches."

"It's all over now," said I, "and the crew and steamer are in safety. We may as well let it rest."

"Oh, I'm not going to make any trouble about it, but if you will play these pranks, one of these days you will be blown up."

The only reply I had to this was, "I don't mind that much, but I certainly do not want to lose the *Lady Brassey*."

One of the advantages I had in not possessing a naval commission was that although under the direct orders of the Admiralty I could not be tried by Court Martial if I did anything that was not approved of.

On another occasion a German submarine was sighted in the Gull Channel as she made her way through the Downs. How and why she allowed herself to be caught by daylight in such a position we never discovered, but as soon as the commander of the submarine saw that he was being chased he

turned and tried to get round the North end of the Goodwin Sands. Unfortunately for him, he cut the Sands too fine and grounded on the North Goodwins.

Our drifters immediately stood towards her, their intentions being to rescue the crew. Obviously mistaking their intentions, the German commander opened fire. This was, of course, returned with the result that lives on both sides were lost unnecessarily.

When it became obvious that he could not save his ship from capture, the commander did two extraordinary things, one inexplicable to British minds, the other quite admirable. Doubtless blaming his navigating officer for their predicament, he blew the unfortunate officer's brains out with his revolver, and then blew both ends off his ship.

We can quite appreciate his desire not to allow the submarine to be captured and can applaud its destruction, although, as a matter of fact, several of the ship's men were killed in the explosions; but it is difficult not to be disgusted at his treatment of a subordinate.

Those who remained alive in the submarine were brought prisoners to Dover, whilst as many bodies as could be recovered were buried with naval honours in Dover Cemetery.

During the afternoon of the same day the Admiral of the Dover Patrol asked if I would try to secure the submarine's periscope. Probably our authorities were anxious to study its workings. I went out to the Sands from Deal in a galley, but found that the



sea was too rough for the galley and so went back to Deal and secured the services of the lifeboat.

I found that the vessel had turned partly over and was lying on her side. However, I managed to get into the conning-tower and would have set to work to cast the periscope adrift had not the lifeboat been in rather an awkward position. It was getting dark, the wind was increasing, and the lifeboat was being damaged by continually bumping against the submarine. I concluded that we had better get off the Sands before the sea became worse, and so we returned to Deal.

I was determined, however, to have another shot at securing the periscope, so the next morning, the weather having moderated, I went out from Deal in a motor-boat at low water. We found that a large lake had formed round the submarine, the sand round the lake being quite dry. We got a small boat which could be carried over the sand and put it in the lake, being careful to keep an eye on the weather.

But I was to be disappointed again, for whilst I was at work on the periscope I was called away to go to the assistance of a steamer which had been mined and was on shore at Dungeness. Before I could get back to the submarine the periscope had been recovered. This was a spot of bad luck after having done the donkey-work.





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